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REQUIEM FOR SOCIAL DEMOCRACY?

Daniel Singer

STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT IN HAITI

Mark Weisbrot

ENVIRONMENTAL ECHOES

Jeanne Riha

Also inside:

Camille Goodison reviews two new studies on the context of the Holocaust.

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

The most striking, and perhaps also the most important fact about the recent elections in the United States is that about half of the potential electorate—actually slightly more than half in 1996—do not vote. Those who do vote come from the middle, upper-middle, and ruling class. Those who do not vote come from the lower-middle, working, and unemployed classes. This pattern has been developing for a long time and now appears to have attained remarkable stability.

The decisive factor in maintaining this stability has been the political-party system consisting of two status-quo parties, Republicans and Democrats, that are virtually indistinguishable in their social composition and differ mostly on the purely ideological plane. The Republicans are avowedly right-wing, while the Democrats are mildly populist. In practice they compete for power at all levels of government, with the spoils of office going to the winners on a roughly fifty-fifty basis.

Nothing in this arrangement should be taken to mean that the political system has no weaknesses and is invulnerable to attack. The campaign for the presidency waged by Jesse Jackson in 1988 points to an

(Continued on inside back cover)

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REQUIEM FOR SOCIAL DEMOCRACY?

by DANIEL SINGER

"When sorrows come, they come not single spies
But in battalions..." *Hamlet* Act 4 sc. 4.

The fall of the Soviet empire was greeted not only as the funeral of socialism. It was also described as marking the final dead end for all revolutionary roads. The practitioners of revolution—Robespierre and Cromwell—as well as its theoreticians—Luxemburg and Marx—were lumped together in retrospective condemnation. Logically, such an offensive against the very idea of radical transformation should have been coupled with praise for gradualism, for Fabian tactics, for progressive change. To use two clichés at once, the "collapse of communism" could have been combined with the "triumph of social democracy." Actually, nothing of the kind happened. On the contrary, the disintegration of the neo-stalinist system has been followed by a major crisis of social-democracy, taken here in its very narrow current definition—the reformist management of capitalist society.

The actual meaning of words is not unimportant. We know the damage done by the identification of communism or socialism with the stalinist system and its sequels. Let us be more precise about the term social-democracy. Originally it was a synonym for the socialist movement. Lenin and Martov,

This was the last of four lectures given by Daniel Singer in January-February 1996 at the Universidad Nacional Autònoma de Mèxico. These lectures make up the preliminary version of the first part of a forthcoming book analysing the problems the Left must tackle to provide a radical alternative.

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the *bolsheviks* and the *mensheviks*, were both members of the Second, i.e. the social-democratic, International. So were the revisionist Eduard Bernstein and Rosa Luxemburg. In theory, at least, reformers and revolutionaries agreed on the final objective—a classless society, with the means of production socialized and inequalities uprooted. In principle, they were not even fundamentally divided over the use of violence, since its degree depended on the resistance provided by the privileged minority. Where they really differed was over the continuity of the movement. The reformers argued that you get to that different society gradually, progressively, within existing institutions. The revolutionaries replied that you cannot get there without a break and a radical reshaping of the institutional framework.

On paper, the unity of purpose survived the interwar period even if, in fact, while the Communist parties aligned themselves with Moscow, the socialist parties became increasingly the upholders of the established order. Even after the last war, however, it took the socialist parties quite a lot of time to square their official proclamations with their practice. The German Social Democrats revised their statutes at Bad Godesberg in 1958, and it was only in 1995 that the British Labour Party got rid of the reference to "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange" in the famous Clause 4 of its charter. But these were clearly shibboleths, relics from the past. The French Socialists were probably the last ones, until 1981, still to pay lip service to the alleged "break with capitalism" and we know what happened to that after Mitterrand's first two years in office. Today there is no possible misunderstanding. Social-democracy no longer claims that its purpose is to get rid of capitalist society. Its only aim is to make improvements within the framework of that society.

But now, apparently, there is no scope any longer in western Europe for such a reformist management of capitalism and this is why the current crisis of social democracy is so serious. To grasp its importance, we shall look at the thirty years of unprecedented growth after the war, when there was room for improvement; at the ideological consequences of

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that prosperity, including the conversion of Communist parties; at the historical irony that this conversion coincided with the beginning of the economic crisis; at the twenty years of restructuring, of our *perestroika*, that followed; and finally at the dilemma facing the west European Left as a result.

I

The thirty years after the last war were for western Europe a period of exceptionally fast economic growth and of deep social transformation. A combination of factors contributed to this unprecedented change. There was the need for reconstruction after the war and the opportunity to absorb the progress achieved by U.S. industry during the conflict. There was American investment and aid, more generous than it would have been otherwise, because of the confrontation with Russia. Western Europe could also extend American methods of mass production as its inner market expanded after the mid-fifties as a result of the successive stages of economic integration. Finally, there was the second phase of the industrial revolution, particularly striking in countries like France or Italy, where concentration had not gone as far as in Britain or Germany during the 19th century.

The clearest sign of the changing social landscape was the disappearance of the peasant in the western half of continental Europe. At the end of the last war, close to a third of the labor force was working on the land in France and more than that in Italy; a quarter of a century later the proportion was approaching Anglo-Saxon levels. This mass migration from country to town, rendered possible by a very fast rise in productivity in agriculture, was not sufficient to satisfy the urban demand for labor. Foreign workers were imported, first from southern Europe, then from overseas. And women entered the labor market in increasing numbers to fill jobs in health and education, in shops, and in offices. If you take the thirty years as a whole, you see a dramatic reduction in farm labor, rough stability among blue collar, and fast expansion among white collar workers.

A rapid growth of the national product, however, is the main feature of the period. If you except Britain, the national

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product was growing—year in, year out—by an average of 5 percent. Such pace, maintained over a long stretch, made it possible and worthwhile to pass on part of the increment to the working people. Those thirty years thus witnessed an exceptional rise in living standards and a deep change in the patterns of consumption. The car, the TV, the refrigerator, the washing machine—those luxuries connected with the American dream became within a generation quite common, and this spread of durable consumer goods was accompanied in Europe—and this is a big difference from the United States—by collective conquests. The national health scheme was gradually extended to the whole population throughout the area. Some limits were put on the employers' powers to hire and fire. A minimum wage, not decent but significant, was introduced. Sickness and unemployment benefits as well as old age pensions were raised. Social democratic ideas prospered as capitalist Europe was building its version of the welfare state.

We should not idealize what the French nostalgically call *les trente glorieuses* (the thirty glorious years). They had their seamy side: the oppression of immigrant workers, the double exploitation of women, the distress of uprooted peasants, the tensions and insecurity of the overcrowded industrial suburbs, and we could go on. The amount of discontent pent up below the glittering surface of our smug consumer society was revealed spectacularly in 1968-69 by the students and young workers in France and Italy who seized their faculties, paralyzed factories, and took to the streets raising questions, still unanswered today but more topical than ever: What growth? For what purpose? For whose profit? For what kind of society, and for what sort of life?

Yet capitalism, still growing fast at that time, managed to resist that wave of protest, and it is amusing to see today on what grounds it was being defended at the time. Not just negatively, because the *gulag* is supposedly the only possible alternative. It was advocated at the time because of its own virtues. Capitalism, it was argued, had found the secret of eternal youth, of permanent growth. The curse of unemployment was lifted as the economic crisis vanished, replaced by

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minor variations in the trade cycle. Why abolish a society which has managed to get rid of its worst calamities, in which the harsh laws of the market have been replaced by Keynesian fine-tuning and the long lines for the dole by the social protection of the state? The underlying climate was social-democratic even in countries where the Socialists were not in office. And the mood was contagious. By the mid-seventies, the Communist orphans, long deprived of their Soviet model and unable to replace it with a project of their own, got in their turn converted. Even their long-term ambition was no longer to change society, only to make changes within that society.

Historians may one day report with amusement that the Communist conversion to the *compromesso storico*, to give the historical compromise its original Italian title, occurred just when the period which gave birth to this strategic change came to an end. One may argue whether the western structural crisis began with the fall of the rate of profit or with the boom in the oil prices, but it is around the mid-seventies that the big break in postwar history takes place. The thirty years of unprecedented growth and social democratic climate are over. The twenty years, so far, of an ideological and political swing to the Right against the background of economic restructuring began.

Paris was a good vantage point to observe the extraordinary ideological somersault. It was in France, after the student and workers' rising of 1968, that the cultural and ideological pillars of our society looked most shaken. The edifice still stood because the various protest movements were unable to combine in a joint offensive. The economic crisis now threatened to provide the unifying element. For the establishment it was vital to persuade the young that, while to rebel might be just, to move from there to collective action on a wider scale was both dangerous and potentially criminal. The message has to be delivered by relatively young apostles vaguely connected with the May movements of 1968. The *nouveaux philosophes* offered their services. Their fare, as you know, was neither new nor profound. It was old and imported: a slice of Popper, a piece of von Hayek, and a big cut of Solzhenitsyn;

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the young French cooks adding only the commercial gravy. Intellectually, the product was nonexistent. As an exercise in propaganda it proved very successful. With the help of the media the message was spread that a revolution could only lead to the *Gulag* and that "total" was tantamount to totalitarian. From "any break is dangerous" it was easy to shift to "there is no alternative" and, finally, to "history has come to an end." The tune was similar because the paymasters were the same.

Having learnt from Marx that the ruling ideology is the ideology of the ruling class, we should not really be surprised. After all, the movement had failed, the regime survived and it preserved its hegemony. In fact, the ideological metamorphosis has been so striking that it cannot be explained just by the clever campaign of the establishment and of its servants. To understand it, we must now look at the last twenty years, with the offensive of capital, the retreat of labor, and the present dilemma of the defeated Left.

II

To see how far we have traveled in twenty years it is enough to listen to the new message. Gone are the social democratic tales about capitalism with a human face. It is the old capitalist gospel, at its toughest, that is once again being preached. Profit is the Almighty and everything must be subordinated to its cult. Private is beautiful and public, by definition, wasteful. The role of the state should always be reduced, except—and it is an enormous exception—where it helps business to make a profit. We can no longer afford to pamper and coddle the idle, the misfits, the dissolute. And if the system happens to favor the rich and impoverish the poor—It can't be helped, it's part of its principle: Unto everyone that hath shall be given (*Matt.* xxv:29). While the respectful Left was reluctant to accept the end of its illusion, the Right was boldly on the attack.

The trade unions were in a weak position to defend the interests of their members not only because they were mentally unprepared for the offensive. They had not used the earlier period to adapt themselves to the deep changes in the

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structure of the labor force: they did not recruit on a mass scale among immigrant or women workers. And now the restructuring struck at their strongholds—mines, the steel works, shipyards—all places where they had their big battalions. True, we were told that this was transitional trouble, that only old industries were affected and this loss of jobs should be compensated by expansion in the services. Indeed, it happened that way for a time. Then the computer, and automation invaded banks, insurance, and distribution, cutting jobs there in the same fashion. Mass unemployment is now at the heart of the European crisis and we shall return to it in a moment, having looked first at the environment in which the crisis occurs, an environment that has not been thrust upon us accidentally, but is a product of *conscious policies* designed to strengthen the power of Capital.

Trade barriers having been lowered earlier, the emphasis in the last twenty years was put on the almost total lifting of restrictions on the international movement of capital. The computers and modems have quickened the pace of communication, facilitated 24-hour a day operations, and made possible the invention of all sorts of hedging systems, but the decision to let money travel freely was *political.* As a result, daily international transactions now exceed on an average the astronomical figure of one thousand billion dollars, that is to say more than the total gold and foreign currency reserves of all the members of the International Monetary Fund. Even allowing for the double counting, this gives an idea of the relative weakness of individual governments when faced with such huge amounts of potentially hot money. Financial capital now reigns supreme and central banks are its servants. Each state knows that its monetary and fiscal policies are constrained by the threat of capital flight. The bargaining power of the unions is also weakened by the possibility given to capital to move freely in search of cheaper labor.

Western Europe was very far from an exception to this trend. As the European Economic Community, now known as the European Union, moved first towards a single market and now prepares itself painfully for a single currency, the individual nation states have lost many of their powers to protect their

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territory, to control flows of capital, to influence the management of their economy. Yet the powers were not transferred to a larger European state wielding them from Brussels. Those were actually the years of deregulation, of general attack on public intervention, with Brussels acting as the national and international keeper of free trade, i.e. of the rule of capital. In the Maastricht treaty, allegedly the guide to European unity, a social chapter was introduced, with some minimum guarantees for the working people so that it could be claimed that labor was not entirely forgotten. Though even this very mild concession proved too much for the British Tory government, if you read the whole treaty it is plain that what the various parties are fighting about is not social progress for the people but the shape to be given to the Europe of big business.

It is within this free trade framework that Europe rediscovered the curse of mass unemployment. It was no longer possible to pretend that the phenomenon was transient or due to the vagaries of the cycle. Naturally the number of the jobless was smaller in the boom than in the slump, but it was higher at the end of each cycle than it had been at the corresponding stage of its predecessor and the share of the unemployed in the labor force reached double figures even in the official data, always crooked on the subject. This was the end of the fairy tale about capitalism without crisis. We were back in familiar Marxist territory with dead labor replacing living labor and creating a reserve army of the unemployed in the process.

Things seem more complicated with the second half of the familiar story, with the need for the system simultaneously to create other jobs, allowing it to extract more surplus value. There are signs that it is losing its capacity for doing it. We may be getting close to the era described by Marx in the *Grundrisse* when "the theft of somebody else's labor time, on which wealth now rests, appears a miserable base compared with the one big industry creates and develops itself." This is what I have in mind when I contrast our technological genius with the absurdity of our social organization. If we limit ourselves to the advanced capitalist countries—simply for the sake of the argument—we could already today tackle the frontier

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between labor and leisure in an entirely different way. Indeed, to face the problem of unemployment, like all other key issues, including those connected with our environment, we need both an entirely different social organization and its democratic application on a world scale.

Forgive me for this digression. This is not the message on unemployment the European governments received from the IMF, the World Bank, or the OECD. Their joint recommendation was much simpler: follow the American example. Not the magic vision of America that the impoverished Europeans imagined after the war. The real United States of today, with its growing gap between the haves and the have-nots, with its ridiculous minimum wage, with its "working poor" and its millions without health insurance.

Not the most splendid of models? If you don't like it, you'll have to lump it. You have no choice. In the deregulated world we have built together—and of which we the international institutions are the watchdogs—you can no longer afford a bearable minimum wage, some degree of security of tenure, fairly decent unemployment benefits or old age pensions. You have no longer the means to pay for a national health service. You will have to rely increasingly on private insurance and private schools, on two-tier health and two-tier education. To cut a long message short, you will have to speed up the dismantling of your welfare state. And since this was social democracy's main claim to gratitude and success, its crisis is, this time, in earnest.

The trajectory of social democracy is not just the result of betrayal by ambitious politicians and union bosses. It is a question of general mood conditioned notably by the scope for meeting popular demands within existing society. During the thirty postwar years of unprecedented prosperity the climate was particularly propitious for social democracy to prosper. During the last twenty years, on the contrary, conditions have become more and more unfavorable. Yet it is only now that the crisis is coming to a head.

It will be objected that the leaders of what the French call *la gauche respectueuse*, the Left respectful of the established order, have already put a great deal of water into their *vin rosé*.

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The Socialists who were in office—in France under François Mitterrand or in Spain under Felipe Gonzales—took an active part in deregulation, in the reduction of state power, in the preparation of the ground for their current dilemma. And those in opposition are no better. A weekly that is the mouthpiece of the financial establishment (*The Economist*, September 2, 1995) noted how the British Labour Party has discovered "social-Thatcherism" and Italy's former Communists, the PDS, "have found free-market economics."

The objection, however, is not relevant. I never suggested that Europe's Socialist leaders were great radicals eager to reshape society. Very far from it. They have swallowed a lot and are probably ready for more. But what they are being asked now is not to be the reformist managers of capitalist society, not even to manage that society as it is without reforms. They are told to get rid of the conquests achieved by the labor movement in the postwar period, on which their reputation was built and their attraction rested. What is at stake is their own fate, the very survival of a kind of Left that hitherto existed in Europe but not in the Untied States.

Here again it may be said that the leaders of the European Left are ready to accept the political consequences of our Americanization. After his first electoral victory President Clinton was the toast of the town amid the respectful Left in London, Paris, or Rome. After four years of failures, humiliations and qualified re-election "success," he is a dubious model. Nevertheless, Tony Blair, the smooth leader of the Labor party, Lionel Jospin, who inherited Mitterrand's position among French Socialists, and Massimo d'Alema, the new head of the Italian PDS, are all still toying with the idea of turning their movements into an equivalent of the American Democratic Party.[1] The snag is that even today such a move would involve crucial modifications: a break of organic links with labor unions; a transformation of parties that were once built on militants into pure electoral machines; and a serious retreat on the front of welfare. The rank-and-file may be bewildered and in total disarray, yet they are the products of a certain political tradition and they are deeply attached to their conquests, even if they have natural misgivings about

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their welfare state. In other words, the problem is not whether Tony, Lionel, and Massimo are willing to oblige. It is whether they can deliver.

In fairness, it must be added that the choice is not between surrendering or carrying on as before. My main argument is that it is impossible simply to go on. The Socialist leaders may have contributed, wittingly or unwittingly, to the transformation of the terrain on which the confrontation takes place. But the game is no longer the same and neither are the rules. And I am not talking here about any revolutionary activity; that is not on the immediate agenda. Simply to preserve the pay packet and the employment of its members, to maintain their social gains, the trade unions and the Left in general would now have to fight to reduce drastically the hours worked and move that struggle rapidly from the national level to that of the European Union. In other words, for merely defensive action the Left would have to mobilize on a mass scale and to think internationally, something it has not done for many, many years.

Will the Left in western Europe now follow its leaders down the American way, forsaking its heritage and committing political suicide? Or will it rebel, use its imagination—discarding stalinist crimes and social-democratic impotence—and, in trying to protect its immediate interests, reinvent a socialist project for our times? This choice will have to be faced all over sooner or later. What I am claiming is that western Europe, because of the contrast between its traditions and the American pattern now being imposed, is the forerunner; that in Europe the choice will have to be made, the battle fought here and now at the turn of this millennium. The demonstrations staged in Italy at the close of 1994, when Silvio Berlusconi attacked Italy's old age pensions, the strikes which paralyzed Paris and precipitated the biggest demonstrations ever in the French provinces when Jacques Chirac, in turn, tried to carry out the instructions of the financial establishment—these were only the first skirmishes of this great battle.

It would be nice to be able to assert that imagination is going to seize power and socialism will be revived in western Europe on the ruins of shattered models. Particularly nice,

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because it would mean history coming full circle. It was our fault, the failure of the socialists in the advanced capitalist countries to carry out a radical transformation of society when we were expected to do so which led to the Marxist tragedy in eastern Europe. And now, at he end of that tragedy, it would be the western Left, finally beginning to perform its task, which would give an example and revive hope throughout the world. What is desirable, however, is not necessarily inevitable. Being neither a prophet nor a preacher, I cannot predict the future, especially as that future is not predetermined. Within certain limits, we can shape it ourselves.

III

Looking forward, I want to raise the issues which, in my view, the movement will have to tackle. I shall just mention the sub-headings. The first questions will have to deal with democracy and the lessons we draw from its absence in the Soviet experiment; democracy in elaborating the project; democracy not just in parliament but at all levels from shopfloor to the very top; democracy as a guarantee against a new system of exploitation. The second series of problems are linked with bringing the socialist project up to date. Here I would first put the question whether the workers (a class interested in the abolition of all classes) are still conceived as the main historical agency and how that working class is now defined? How does the project of social emancipation based on the workers connect with women's liberation or with the ecological movement, not in a loose addition but in a common vision?

A third closely related series refers to what one might call modernity. Here I can see two pitfalls: one is that, repelled by capitalist modernity, one is tempted to idealize the past; the other is to identify modernity with capitalism. The difficulty is to conceive a realistic utopia and examine all technological inventions so as to distinguish those which can only foster domination from those which could be used in a different society. Finally, there are the questions connected with internationalism: can the nation state still be the first ground for radical change, how quickly must the movement spread and how long can it survive at the intermediate level of, say, the

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European Union? The principles are still the same: as there can be no socialism in a country in which people are exploited there can be no socialism either in a nation exploiting another nation. The real problem is the one of transition. Probably a quick transition because, as capitalism now spreads across the planet, the movement, if it wants to survive, has internationalism thrust upon it.

I also want to insist on the contradictory notion of time; the time that we need and the time that is running out. We require time, particularly in eastern Europe, to dissociate socialism from the Soviet tank, from the *Gulag*, from stalinism, and from guilt by association. But we also need time all over the world to brush up our project, revive our vision, draw lessons from our fast changing environment, and not only from the past.

Yet, at the same time, there is an urgency. Nature abhors the void, and if we do not fill it with rational, progressive proposals, the forces of unreason will exploit the rising discontent. They already do. The peril is greater in eastern Europe where social tensions are closer to the point of explosion. It is serious in the western half as well. The consolidation of the xenophobic, racist, National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, of the neo-fascist Gianfranco Fini and the TV tycoon Silvio Berlusconi in Italy are reminders that the famous mole is digging, but digging in the wrong and dangerous direction. This is the sense in which time is running short and we must, wherever we can, quicken the pace of events.

The second point I want to mention concerns the role that we intellectuals, whatever that word now means, can play in such a socialist resurrection. Certainly not that of mandarins laying down the law. The idea of a finished blueprint handed down to the masses is gone, we hope for ever, together with the conception of a movement made up of battalions marching with military discipline. On the other hand, people do need a vision. After so many broken hopes and shattered illusions, they can still explode in anger. It is idle to expect them to engage in sustained political action unless they know something about the ends and means, about where we are going and how we intend to get there. It is in the elaboration

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of such a project, of such an itinerary—which will naturally be rewritten as we develop our knowledge and our political consciousness—that the intellectuals can play a role, fulfill their own function. They can act as keepers of historical memory, as analysts of new trends, as links between various experiments. They can venture new ideas and issue warnings based on precedents.

Yet they have an earlier task on their hands. Normally we have to tackle a dilemma that can be summed up as follows: a project can only emerge when the time is ripe, that is to say when it is inspired by a genuine social movement. That movement, on the other hand, requires a vision to really take off. Today, however, we have a preliminary assignment before we come to solving that dilemma. We must first persuade people once again, and this is imperative, that collective political action is both worthwhile and possible. This is, in my opinion, the ideological battle of the moment, the *kulturkampf* of our times and we should all be judged by the position we take in it because the forces aligned seem, at least on the surface, so fantastically disproportionate.

The establishment has at its disposal a host of preachers, pundits, and other servants. It can count on turncoats, who have grown in numbers in recent years, and on the faint-hearted, who do not have to be bribed or twisted, but whose desertion, whose silence is a great asset. It can rely on the powers of inertia and the crippling effects of routine. Above all, the establishment has at its command the mighty machine of the media which for several years now, has been repeating the same tune in various versions. Its main message is that there can be no redemption beyond the capitalist horizon: they have tried, says the message, failed, and produced a monstrosity in the process. Thus even to search for a different society is criminal. Ye who have entered this world need not like it; you must resign yourself to the fact that there is no way out, not in your lifetime. The crudest version says that history has come to a full stop. More sophisticated ones suggest that in a distant day humankind will start seeking once again, since such is its nature, but that this cannot and should not happen in our times.

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It is against this all-pervasive propaganda that we must fight on every possible occasion, that we must speak on any available platform. Rendered careful and humble by our past defeats and disappointments, perfectly aware that for the moment we are a handful compared with the multitude on the other side, but also fully conscious that the balance will shift very rapidly once history quickens pace, we must do everything in our power to persuade people, and particularly the young people, of something that once seemed self-evident, namely that it is possible to change life, yes *life*, by changing society through collective political action.

NOTES

1. The preceding passage has be re-written since the lecture was given.

(Continued from inside back cover)

Since 1988 we have lived through two of the most "boring" elections in recent memory (the term became quite a favorite with the media this last go-around). Jesse Jackson shot his bolt in 1988 and there was no chance of a repeat performance in 1992 or 1996. The Democrats and Republicans, sharing power in Washington, can relax for four more years.

But in historical terms four years is a short time, and long term trends that have been in evidence for a quarter of a century now are unlikely to be interrupted, let alone reversed, any time soon. Capitalism as a global system has been slowing down, with dire consequences for developed and undeveloped countries alike. What now seems a period of relative calm will certainly not last. Stormy weather lies ahead, and inappropriate measures to cope with it—appropritate ones being ruled out by capitalism's deeply entrenched special interests and ideological biases—will make it worse.

Beyond that, predictions are out of the question. But hope is not. Episodes like the New Deal in the middle of the Great Depression of the 1930s and Jesse Jackson's brave struggles in the 1980s give hope that this tortured society of decadent monopoly capitalism may still be capable of fighting back.

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THE SOCIALIST IDEAL

by WILLIAM MORRIS

In the preceding article Daniel Singer calls for us to "conceive a realistic utopia and examine all technological inventions so as to distinguish those which can only foster domination from those which could be used in a different society." Similarly, the Marxist philosopher Roy Bhaskar has recently called for "a William Morris—type movement of positive concrete utopianism to stand alongside Marx's negative explanatory critique [of political economy]." (Dialectics, (London; New York: Verso, 1993), p. 345). This year that has just ended was the centennial of the death of William Morris. A bit belatedly we offer this article, not only as a memorial but as a reminder of our duty to conceive a concrete, realistic, utopia. The creation of beauty from the means available, whether the Aboriginal sand paintings or a computer design, is the birthright of every child on the planet. This universal Enlightenment value stands negated for the great majority of the worlds' children by the capitalist world order of our times, and the negation of that negation is our socialist, revolutionary, task.—The Editors

Some people will perhaps not be prepared to hear that Socialism has any ideal of art, for in the first place it is so obviously founded on the necessity for dealing with the bare economy of life that many, and even some Socialists, can see nothing save that economic basis; and moreover, many who might be disposed to admit the necessity of an economic change in the direction of Socialism believe quite sincerely that art is fostered by the inequalities of condition which it is the first business of Socialism to do away with, and indeed that it cannot exist without them. Nevertheless, in the teeth of

William Morris (1834-1896) was a poet, artist, and outstanding advocate of socialism. He wrote this article for the *New Review*, January 1891.

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these opinions I assert first that Socialism is an all-embracing theory of life, and that as it has an ethic and a religion of its own, so also it has an aesthetic: so that to every one who wishes to study Socialism duly it is necessary to look on it from the aesthetic point of view. And, secondly, I assert that inequality of condition, whatever may have been the case in former ages of the world, has now become incompatible with the existence of a healthy art.

But before I go further I must explain that I use the word *art* in a wider sense than is commonly used amongst us today; for convenience' sake, indeed, I will exclude all appeals to the intellect and emotions that are not addressed to the eyesight, though properly speaking, music and all literature that deals with style should be considered as portions of art; but I can exclude from consideration as a possible vehicle of art no production of man which can be looked at. And here at once becomes obvious the sundering of the way between the Socialist and the commercial view of art. To the Socialist a house, a knife, a cup, a steam engine, or what not, anything, I repeat, that is made by man and has form, must either be a work of art or destructive to art. The Commercialist, on the other hand, divides 'manufactured articles' into those which are prepensely works of art, and are offered for sale in the market as such, and those which have no pretense and could have no pretense to artistic qualities. The one side assets indifference, the other denies it. The commercialist sees that in the great mass of civilized human labour there is no pretense to art, and thinks that this is natural, inevitable, and on the whole desirable. The Socialist, on the contrary, sees in this obvious lack of art a *disease* peculiar to modern civilization and hurtful to humanity; and furthermore believes it to be a disease which can be remedied.

This disease and injury to humanity, also, he thinks is no trifling matter, but a grievous deduction from the happiness of man; for he knows that the all-pervading art of which I have been speaking, and to the possibility of which the Commercialist is blind, is *the expression of pleasure in the labour of production*; and that, since all persons who are not mere burdens on the community must produce, in some form or another, it

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follows that under our present system most *honest* men must lead unhappy lives, since their work, which is the most important part of their lives, is devoid of pleasure.

Or, to put it very bluntly and shortly, under the present state of society happiness is only possible to artists and thieves.

It will at once be seen from this statement how necessary it is for Socialists to consider the due relation of art to society; for it is their aim to realize a reasonable, logical, and stable society; and of the two groups above-named it must be said that the artists (using the word in its present narrow meaning) are few, and are too busy over their special work (small blame to them) to pay much heed to public matters; and that the thieves (of all classes) form a disturbing element of society.

Now, the Socialist not only sees this disease in the body politic, but also thinks that he knows the cause of it, and consequently can conceive of a remedy; and that all the more because the disease is in the main peculiar, as above-said, to modern civilization. Art was once the common possession of the whole people; it was the rule in the Middle Ages that the produce of handicraft was beautiful. Doubtless, there were eyesores in the palmy days of mediaeval art, but these were caused by destruction of wares, not as now by the making of them: it was the act of war and devastation that grieved the eye of the artist then; the sacked town, the burned village, the deserted fields. Ruin bore on its face the tokens of its essential hideousness; to day, it is prosperity that is externally ugly.

The story of the Lancashire manufacturer who, coming back from Italy, that sad museum of the nations, rejoiced to see the smoke with which he was poisoning the beauty of the earth, pouring out of his chimneys, gives us a genuine type of the active rich man of the Commercial Period, degraded into incapacity of even wishing for decent surroundings. In those past days the wounds of war were grievous indeed, but peace would bring back pleasure to men, and the hope of peace was at least conceivable; but now, peace can no longer help us and has not hope for us; the prosperity of the country, by whatever "leaps and bounds" it may advance, will but make everything more and more ugly about us; it will become more a definitely established axiom that the longing for beauty, the interest in

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history, the intelligence of the whole nation, shall be of no power to stop one rich man from injuring the whole nation to the full extent of his riches, that is, of his privilege of taxing other people; it will be proved to demonstration, at least to all lovers of beauty and a decent life, that private property is public robbery.

Nor, however much we may suffer from this if we happen to be artists, should we Socialists at least complain of it. For, in fact, the "peace" of Commercialism is not peace, but bitter war, and the ghastly waste of Lancashire and the ever-spreading squalor of London are at least object-lessons to teach us that this is so, that there is war in the land which quells all our efforts to live wholesomely and happily. The *necessity* of the time, I say, is to feed the commercial war which we are all of us waging in some way or another; if, while we are doing this, we can manage, some of us, to adorn our lives with some little pleasure of the eyes, it is well, but it is no *necessity*, it is a luxury, the lack of which we must endure.

Thus, in this matter also does the artificial famine of inequality, felt in so many other ways, impoverish us despite of our riches; and we sit starving amidst our gold, the Midas of the ages.

Let me state bluntly a few facts about the present condition of the arts before I try to lay before my readers the definite Socialist ideal which I have been asked to state. It is necessary to do this because no ideal for the future can be conceived of unless we proceed by way of contrast; it is the desire to escape from the present failure which forces us into what are called "ideal"; in fact, they are mostly attempts by persons of strong hope to embody their discontent with the present.

It will scarcely be denied, I suppose that at present art is only enjoyed, or indeed thought of, by comparatively a few persons, broadly speaking, by the rich and the parasites that minister to them directly. The poor can only afford to have what art is given to them in charity; which is of the inferior quality inherent in all such gifts—not worth picking up except by starving people.

Now, having eliminated the poor (that is, almost the whole mass of those that make anything that has *form*, which,

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as before-said, must either be helpful to life or destructive of it) as not sharing in art from any side, let us see how the rich, who do share in it to a certain extent, get on with it. But poorly, I think, although, they are rich. By abstracting themselves from the general life of man that surrounds them, they can get some pleasure from a few works of art; whether they be part of the wreckage of times past, or produced by individual labour, intelligence, and patience of a few men of genius of today fighting desperately against all the tendencies of the age. But they can do no more than surround themselves with a little circle of hot-house atmosphere of art hopelessly at odds with the common air of day. A rich man may have a house full of pictures and beautiful books, and furniture and so forth; but as soon as he steps out into the streets he is again in the midst of ugliness to which he must blunt his senses, or be miserable if he really cares about art. Even when he is in the country, amidst the beauty of trees and fields, he cannot prevent some neighboring landowner making the landscape hideous with utilitarian agriculture; nay, it is almost certain that his own steward or agent will force him into doing the like on his own lands; he cannot even rescue his parish church from the hands of the restoring parson. He can go where he like and do what he like outside the realm of art, but there he is helpless. Why is this? Simply because the great mass of effective art, that which pervades all life, *must* be the result of the harmonious co-operation of neighbors. And a rich man has no neighbours—nothing but rivals and parasites.

Now the outcome of this is that though the educated classes (as we call them) have theoretically some share in art, or might have, as a matter of fact they have very little. Outside the circle of the artists themselves there are very few even of the educated classes who care about art. Art is kept alive by a small group of artists working in a spirit quite antagonistic to the spirit of the time; and they also suffer from the lack of co-operation which is an essential lack in the art of our epoch. They are limited, therefore, to the production of a few individualistic works, which are looked upon by almost everybody as curiosities to be examined, and not as pieces of beauty to be enjoyed. Nor have they any position or power of helping

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the public in general matters of taste (to use a somewhat ugly word). For example, in laying out all the parks and pleasure grounds which have lately been acquired for the public, as far as I know, no artist has been consulted; whereas they ought to have been laid out by a committee of artists; and I will venture to say that even a badly chosen committee (and it might easily be well chosen) would have saved the public from most of the disasters which have resulted from handing them over to the tender mercies of the landscape gardener.

This, then, is the position of art in this epoch. It is helpless and crippled amidst the sea of utilitarian brutality. It cannot perform the most necessary functions: it cannot build a decent house, or ornament a book, or lay out a garden, or prevent the ladies of the time from dressing in a way that caricatures the body and degrades it. On the one hand it is cut off from the traditions of the past, on the other from the life of the present. It is the art of a clique and not of the people. The people are too poor to have any share of it.

As an artist I *know* this, because I can *see* it. As a Socialist I know that it can never be bettered as long as we are living in that special condition of inequality which is produced by the direct and intimate exploitation of the makers of wares, the workmen, at the hands of those who are not producers in any even the widest, acceptation of the word.

The first point, therefore, in the Socialist ideal of art is that it should be common to the whole people; and this can only be the case if it comes to be recognized that art should be an integral part of all manufactured wares that have definite form and are intended for any endurance. In other words, instead of looking upon art as a luxury incidental to a certain privileged position, the Socialist claims art as a necessity of human life which society has no right to withhold from any one of the citizens; and he claims also that in order that this claim may be established people shall have every opportunity of taking to the work which each is best for, not only that there may be the least possible waste of human effort, but also that that effort may be exercised pleasurably. For I must here repeat what I have often had to say, that the pleasurable exercise of our energies is at once the source of all art and the

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cause of all happiness: that is to say, it is the end of life. So that once again the society which does not give a due opportunity to all its members to exercise their energies pleasurably has forgotten the end of life, is not fulfilling its functions, and therefore is a mere tyranny to be resisted at all points.

Furthermore, in the making of wares there should be some of the spirit of the handicraftsman, whether the goods be made by hand, or by machine that helps the hand, or by one that supersedes it. Now the essential part of the spirit of the handicraftsman is the instinct for looking at the wares in themselves and their essential use as the object of his work. Their secondary uses, the exigencies of the market, are nothing to him; it does not matter to him whether the goods he makes are for the use of a slave or a king, his business is to make them as excellent as may be; if he does otherwise he is making wares for rogues to sell to fools, and he is himself a rogue by reason of his complicity. All this means that he is making the goods for himself; for his own pleasure in making them and using them. But to do this he requires reciprocity, or else he will be ill-found, except in the goods that he himself makes. His neighbors must make goods in the same spirit that he does; and each, being a good workman after his kind, will be ready to recognize excellence in the others, or to note defects; because the primary purpose of the goods, their *use* in fact, will never be lost sight of. Thus the market of neighbors, the interchange of mutual good services, will be established, and will take the place of the present gambling-market, and its bond-slave the modern factory system. But the working in this fashion, with the unforced and instinctive reciprocity of service, clearly implies the existence of something more than a mere gregarious collection of workmen. It implies a consciousness of the existence of a society of neighbors, that is of equals; of men who do indeed expect to be made use of by others, but only so far as the services they give are pleasing to themselves; so far as they are services the performance of which is necessary to their own well-being and happiness.

Now, as on the one hand I *know* that no worthy popular art can grow out of any other soil than this of freedom and mutual respect, so on the other I feel sure both that this

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opportunity will be given to art and also that it will avail itself of it, and that, once again, nothing which is made by man will be ugly, but will have its due form, and its due ornament, will tell the tale of its making and the tale of its use, even when it tells no other tale. And this because when people once more take pleasure in their work, when the pleasure rises to a certain point, the expression of it will become irresistible, and that expression of pleasure of art, whatever form it may take. As to that form, do not let us trouble ourselves about it; remember that after all the earliest art which we have record of is still art to us; that Homer is no more out of date than Browning; that the most scientifically-minded of people (I had almost said the most utilitarian), the ancient Greeks, are still thought to have produced good artists; that the most superstitious epoch of the world, the early Middle Ages, produced the freest art; though there is reason enough for that if I had time to go into it.

For in fact, considering the relation of the modern world to art, our business is now, and for long will be, not so much attempting to produce definite art, as rather clearing the ground to give art its opportunity. We have been such slaves to the modern practice of the unlimited manufacture of makeshifts for real wares, that we run a serious risk of destroying the very material of art; of making it necessary that men, in order to have any artistic perception, should be born blind, and should get their ideas of beauty from the hearsay of books. This degradation is surely the first thing which we should deal with; and certainly Socialists must deal with it at the first opportunity; *they* at least must see, however much others may shut their eyes: for they cannot help reflecting that to condemn a vast population to live in South Lancashire while art and education are being furthered in decent places, is like feasting within earshot of a patient on the rack.

Anyhow, the first step towards the fresh new-birth of art *must* interfere with the privilege of private persons to destroy the beauty of the earth for their private advantage, and thereby to rob the community. The day when some company of enemies of the community are forbidden, for example, to turn the fields of Kent into another collection of cinder heaps

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in order that they may extract wealth, unearned by them, from a mass of half-paid labourers; the day when some hitherto all-powerful "pig-skin stuffed with money" is told that he shall not pull down some ancient building in order that he may force his fellow citizens to pay him additional rack-rent for land which is not his (save as the newly acquired watch of the highwayman is)—that day will be the beginning of the fresh new-birth of art in modern times.

But that day will also be one of the memorable days of Socialism; for this very privilege, which is but the privilege of the robber by force of arms, is just the thing which it is the aim and end of our present organization to uphold; and all the formidable executive at the back of it, army, police, law courts, presided over by the judge as representing the executive, is directed towards this one end—to take care that the richest shall rule, and shall have full licence to injure the commonwealth to the full extent of his riches.

"The meeting between the representative of God on Earth and Fidel, representative of man on earth, is purifying and encouraging."

—Tomas Borge, Deputy General Secretary of the Sandanista National Liberation Front, referring to the meeting between Fidel Castro and the Pope in November 1996.

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STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT IN HAITI

by MARK WEISBROT

In a recent *New York Times* article on IMF lending, Haiti was singled out for an unusual distinction. "All the countries of the region with the exception of Cuba and Haiti are going after what's known as the Washington consensus on economic policy," said Michael Hood, an analyst at J.P. Morgan.[1]

This indicates that in spite of widespread cynicism and pessimism, even on the left, the battle over structural adjustment in Haiti is not over yet. The process by which Haiti reached its current state is worth examining for the purpose of understanding the obstacles to development that are part of the international economic order, not only for Haiti but for the majority of countries in the world.

Haiti's structural adjustment began in the 1980s, and was directed by certain international financial institutions (IFIs). These institutions include not only the IMF, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, other multi-lateral institutions that shape economic policy (e.g. the United Nations Development Program), but also the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of State. The latter two are not technically IFI's in the same sense as the others, but their role in shaping policy in co-ordination

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with the others is so powerful, especially in Haiti, that they can be included in the same category.

As in most of the underdeveloped world, some "adjustment" was indeed necessary. Haiti was hard hit by the U.S. recession of 1980-82—which drastically reduced the market for its exports—and also by a sharp drop in earnings from coffee exports. These shocks followed the oil price increases of the previous decade, and were combined with record-high interest rates on foreign borrowing. The result was an entire decade, the 1980s, in which per capita income in Haiti (as in Latin America as a whole) actually declined.

A disinterested observer might have concluded that Haiti's dependence on unstable foreign markets had produced this extreme vulnerability to external shocks, and that Haiti needed to develop its own national industrial and agricultural policy. The IFI's, however, drew the opposite conclusion, and set out to further open Haiti's economy and gamble its future on the development of a low-wage, export assembly industry of light manufactured goods. It is perhaps worth a brief description of their analysis, shared by mainstream academic experts, as background to understanding the process of structural adjustment in Haiti.

Their view combines traditional neoclassical (or "neoliberal") economic theory with old-style Malthusianism to produce an explanation for Haiti's ecological and economic crisis, as well as a "solution." In this view, Haiti's poverty is a population problem. As population has grown, land use has moved from forest, to pasture, to perennial crops, and finally to ever more labor intensive and environmentally destructive food crops. At the same time, the increase in urban population has stimulated the growth of demand for charcoal, which is met by further deforestation and therefore more erosion of arable land as well. (Charcoal is not used as much in the countryside for fuel, in areas where residents can gather brush– this is another environmental reason for a development strategy that slows the pace of rural-urban migration).

The basic agronomy of the situation is that the food crops do not have the roots that, e.g., coffee has to bind the soil, and their cultivation increases the amount of time that

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the soil is exposed to wind and rains—due to plowing and harvesting up to several times a year. Thus erosion increases as food production struggles to keep up with population growth.

The conservative and neo-liberal analyses (e.g. the Malthusian picture in Preeg[2] or Lundahl[3]) picture the whole process as driven by population growth, and therefore conclude that this must be reduced directly. They are certainly right to emphasize that the process is a self-perpetuating cycle: the environmental destruction brought on by population growth reduces productivity in agriculture, which increases poverty and therefore the cultivation of more marginal lands and other environmentally destructive techniques. But causality is still important, and there is a wealth of evidence to indicate that population growth is the dependent variable, and reducing it will require such things as increasing economic security, access to education, lowering the infant mortality rate, and food security. In Haiti's case, this also means that a program to increase food self-sufficiency will have to be accompanied by a massive national effort at soil conservation.

The IFI's have forbidden or refused to fund the most obviously rational measures to alleviate rural poverty: most importantly agrarian reform, agricultural extension programs, increasing food self-sufficiency, as well as credit, tools, and infrastructure targeted at the peasantry. The need to generate off-farm employment in the countryside, so as to slow the rate of rural-urban migration, is also ignored. Instead, they have formulated a strategy that relies on increasing agro-export production (e.g. coffee and fruit trees which do not cause the erosion problems of food crops), and most importantly, the further development of the assembly sector.

The futility of relying on the assembly sector to generate employment, growth, and economic development should be obvious by now. In 1990 (the last year of normal economic activity before the coup and embargo), 84 percent of this sector's exports were composed of imported inputs.[4] When one takes into account that much of the profits are taken out of the country, the net contribution of this sector to Haiti's foreign exchange earnings is negligible.

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This point cannot be over-emphasized, since all of the arguments about the need to privatize and modernize particular parts of the country's infrastructure, keep real wages from rising, and generally assure a favorable investment climate are based on the need to attract foreign investment to the assembly sector. It is well recognized that this sector contributes relatively little to employment: at its peak it employed 60,000 workers, which dropped to 4000 after the coup; it has since grown to about 18,000. Nor does it contribute to backward and forward linkages that might develop other sectors of the economy. So the only selling point of this sector is that it supposedly provides exports that can fuel the growth of the economy; however this is a statistical misrepresentation based on counting the whole value of this sector's exports as though it were produced in Haiti, when only a small fraction of it actually is.

The rest of the IFI's program for Haiti is based on standard neoclassical dogma, formulated without regard to specific country conditions, and IFI documents describing it often read like an undergraduate economics textbook. Tariff and non-tariff barriers to imports must be removed, relatively high interest rates and a tight control over the money supply must be maintained to prevent inflation, and state-owned industries should be privatized. The merits of these particular policies will be addressed below, but by now it should be clear that the IFI's plan is not a development strategy at all, and offers little hope of resolving Haiti's economic or related ecological crisis.

The last Structural Adjustment Facility (a medium term loan from the IMF) was administered in 1986. The process of structural adjustment was subsequently interrupted by the instability that followed the fall of the dictator Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc") Duvalier in 1986, and most importantly by the election of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990. It is important to recognize that the coup that overthrew Aristide the following September was very much a part of the same process in which structural adjustment prevails. Violence is the last resort against those nations and governments that stray too far from the "Washington consensus."

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From a broader perspective, the power of the IFI's can be seen as the primary means by which the international economic order, particularly the gross imbalance and injustice between rich and poor countries, is maintained in the present era. Two-thirds of the countries of the world, including the once great power Russia, now reduced to a per capita income less than Mexico's, are subject to this form of late-twentieth century colonialism. Most of the time this raw economic power—given the level of indebtedness and the desperate need for foreign exchange, and the fact that most other sources of funding are contingent on reaching agreement with the IMF—is enough to ensure that no government will pursue an independent development strategy or any policy that challenges the international division of labor. Occasionally, however, the threat of economic strangulation does not suffice to enforce compliance, and direct violence is used.

Such was the case with the election of Aristide, who managed to take the U.S. State Department by surprise by entering the 1990 presidential race just a few weeks before the election and winning two-thirds of the vote. The United States' sponsorship of the coup that cut short his term after eight months was never in doubt. Just weeks after the coup, the Bush administration announced that restoring democracy did not necessarily mean restoring Aristide.[5] The leadership of the coup—Lieutenant General Raul Cedras, Port-au-Prince Police Chief Michel Francois, and the junta's Chief of Staff, General Philippe Biamby– were all on the CIA payroll, and *Time* magazine reported that the CIA had advance knowledge of the coup but made no move to prevent it.[6]

The Clinton administration's half-hearted attempts to remove the coup regime were repeatedly undermined by his own executive branch, culminating in the embarrassing derailment of the Governor's Island accords which were supposed to restore the Aristide government. The long arm of the CIA was everywhere—not only encouraging Cedras' intransigence, but behind the scenes of the humiliating rout of the USS Harlan County in October of 1993, which attempted to land the first peacekeeping troops of the accords. CIA

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employee and founder of the death squad organization FRAPH, Emmanuel Constant, later admitted to orchestrating this incident.[7] Nonetheless an unusual combination of political forces and events—including the mounting exodus of Haitian refugees, pressure from the Congressional Black Caucus, Randall Robinson's hunger strike, and Cedras' confusion as to which part of the U.S. foreign policy establishment he should obey—led to the unprecedented invasion that restored the Aristide government a year later. It was unprecedented only in the sense that the U.S. actually used military force to restore a democratic government, and one that it had previously helped to overthrow.

All this is essential background to the events that followed, most importantly the resumption of the process of structural adjustment. Aristide was returned to power, but was still viewed with great suspicion, and sometimes hostility by most U.S. policy makers. While in exile, and as a condition for U.S. support, he signed an agreement with the Paris club of international creditors.[8] This agreement has been cited by Aristide's critics as committing Haiti to a "neoliberal" future, and it certainly did, at least on paper. But it was not binding in the sense that agreements with the IMF or World Bank commit the government to specific policies and targets, and make disbursement of aid conditional on the government's performance.

The first agreement to do this was the Standby Arrangement, signed by the government of Haiti in February of 1995.[9] A Standby Arrangement is a short-term agreement with the IMF, typically for 12-18 months. It allows the borrowing country a certain amount of credit conditional on meeting certain macroeconomic targets, subject to periodic reviews. This agreement is normally the prelude to other, medium and longer term agreements involving more structural changes—hence the term "structural adjustment."

Interestingly, this Standby Arrangement was by no means an austerity policy. The current account (mostly trade) and the government budget are the two major balances that the IMF generally restricts, often at the expense of great suffering by the working and poor sectors of society. But in

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this agreement both of these deficits were allowed to increase quite substantially, financed by an influx of foreign loans and grants. The money supply targets—basically restrictions on the amount of credit that the central bank can extend—were fairly typical, but even these were not all that binding in the sense that Haiti was not threatened with a cutoff of loan disbursements if these targets were not met.

The worst part of the Standby Arrangement was probably the requirement that tariffs be reduced, especially on imported basic foods. The immediate effect of this part of the agreement was mitigated by the fact that the new, lower tariffs were calculated on the basis of a higher (floating) exchange rate (lower value of the gourde as against the U.S. dollar). This canceled out part of the effect of the tariff reduction. Nonetheless there is no doubt that Haiti needs much more protection for domestic rice, one of its most important staple crops. Rice production had already been hard hit in recent years by competition from heavily subsidized "Miami rice," and has most likely declined further as a result of these tariff reductions.

The Standby Arrangement's language on privatization was vague enough so as not to commit the government to anything specific, except that the cement and flour mill, currently closed, would not reopen without some sort of privatization—but even this did not mandate any sale of public assets to private owners.

How are we to interpret this relatively loose agreement by which the IMF, which as a rule sets the policies that the other IFIs then follow, granted its initial seal of approval to the second Aristide government? The most plausible explanation points to domestic political considerations within the U.S. Having achieved what the media regarded as a major foreign policy "success" in restoring "democracy" to Haiti—no one seemed to notice who destroyed it in the first place—Clinton was reluctant to impose conditions that might disturb the peace. And as far as the Americas are concerned, the European and Japanese governments defer to the U.S., which means that the IMF does whatever the U.S. government tells it to do in this region.

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Aristide took advantage of this political space to get rid of the Haitian armed forces. This was no small achievement, since the original invasion plan of the Clinton Administration was to remove only the top three officers of the repressive apparatus (Cedras, Biamby, and Francois) and leave the rest in place. A foreign diplomat quoted in the *New York Times* observed that Aristide had "completely outwitted the Americans on this."[10]

But he did not challenge the neoliberal economic agenda that the IFI's had put together, nor did the Haitian government attempt to institute any serious economic reforms that would benefit Haiti's poor majority. Without access to what went on behind the scenes, it is difficult to say exactly why not. It is doubtful that Aristide himself actually believed that the IFI's plan was going to help Haiti. It is possible that he felt that getting rid of the armed forces and the hated section chief system—a system of rural deputies that terrorized the countryside with impunity—was all that he could accomplish without provoking another coup. After all, the U.S. military and intelligence establishment was responsible for the security of his government as well as his personal security. We do not know what threats were made, implicitly or explicitly.

In any case the Republicans in the U.S. had no interest in preserving the peace in Haiti, and waged a continuous campaign of harassment against the Aristide government, mostly without success. But their influence over U.S.AID's funding in Congress, along with the crass commercial interests of U.S. businesses hoping to cash in on what one Congressman called "payback time" (for the invasion), managed to provoke a confrontation by October of 1995 over the issue of privatization. U.S.AID cut off its balance of payments support at that time, in an attempt to speed up the pace of privatization.

The cut-off of $4.6 million in balance of payments support was enough to send the Haitian gourde, which had pretty much stabilized since Aristide's return a year earlier, plummeting. It lost about 25 percent of its value, causing a similar increase in the rate of inflation. (This is due to the

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increased price of imports following the depreciation of the local currency). This episode shows how vulnerable Haiti was (and remains) to even a relatively small withdrawal of foreign support, since the capital flight and resulting currency depreciation immediately cause a round of inflation that puts basic necessities out of reach for thousands of poor people. (One of the few economic reforms proposed by the second Aristide government was the initiation of a system of government stores for the distribution of basic foods, but even this modest beginning was killed by warnings from the Clinton administration).

Aristide's Prime Minister Smarck Michel supported privatization, but as a result of popular resistance, he was not able to convince the rest of the government to cave in on the issue. He resigned soon after the cutoff of balance of payments support. Popular opposition to privatization remains strong to this day, and has so far managed to prevent Haiti's government from actually selling any major state enterprise. In the meantime, Haiti's state-owned enterprises have, as a group, continued to operate at a profit, despite the IMF's requirement that Haiti's central bank deprive them of the credit needed to undertake even necessary maintenance and repair.

The national telecommunications company (Teleco) is immensely profitable and earned $71 million in foreign exchange in 1994. Revenue from the telephone company has amounted to 3 percent of Haiti's Gross Domestic Product over the last decade. The World Bank's own study of Haiti's state-owned enterprises, for which it was paid $2 million, indicated that an additional $150 million per year could be generated by expanding phone service. The new investment required could therefore be financed primarily from Teleco revenues. If the Haitian government were to lose this source of revenue and foreign exchange, it would be difficult if not impossible to replace it. This would greatly increase Haiti's dependence on foreign borrowing and make it even more difficult to finance national development and social needs such as education and health care. In short, privatizing the telephone company would be an enormous mistake for any Haitian government.

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The electricity company (EdH) is presently neither profitable nor capable of meeting current demand. However, most of its problems are due to the fact that only about half of the electricity produced is actually billed for, and of this amount, only about 25 percent is paid. Much of the unpaid electricity goes to established businesses and residences, and not just to illegal connections in poor neighborhoods. Privatization will not solve these enforcement problems, which would remain the responsibility of the state.

Privatization of EdH would leave Haiti with a powerful private monopoly able to exploit its market power through unreasonably high prices, especially in the absence of a developed regulatory structure. Electricity is also essential to any overall development strategy. For example, rural electrification could play a vital role in developing agro-processing industries and employment in the countryside. And electrification must be part of an overall energy policy, which among other things must reduce the charcoal consumption that is responsible for most of Haiti's continuing deforestation. A privately owned company would have no reason to take any of these needs into account in formulating its investment, pricing, or other policies.

Even the closed-down cement company, according to the Bank's own study, is capable of producing 200,000 tons of cement per year at competitive costs with very minimal investment. And the availability of reasonably-priced, domestically produced cement could be important to any national development strategy that required, for example, large scale investments in infrastructure.

For all of these reasons and more, the struggle over privatization reveals the depth of the antagonism between the IFIs and the development needs of a country like Haiti. It also illustrates how the IFI's real damage is done in the world. If we look at the world at a particular moment in time, the IMF's argument that "there is no alternative" to e.g., reducing the government budget deficit or tightening credit, often has an element of truth to it. Sometimes it is even true that the government has borrowed or overvalued its currency at an unsustainable level. The IMF is not wrong to point this out,

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but it's real crime is to prohibit the adoption of any alternative policies that would actually allow the country to develop its own industry and agriculture in accordance with its own needs and along a sustainable growth path. In the extreme case—such as Russia, which has endured a loss of income greater than that of our own Great Depression in just five years of IMF tutelage—the damage is immediate and obvious. But in most cases it is really the long-term prevention of economic development that keeps literally hundreds of millions of people in crushing poverty throughout the world.

This is particularly clear in the case of Haiti, where fairly large amounts of money have been appropriated by the IFI's since Aristide's return. Out of a promised $2.12 billion, $515 million had already been disbursed by last year—yet the Haitian people have very little to show for it. These are substantial funds in a country with a GDP of about $1.7 billion. Yet Haiti's status as the poorest country in the hemisphere remains as secure as ever. The majority of the population is malnourished, most adults cannot read or write, and the mortality rate for childern under five years (at 125 per thousand) is by far the worst in the Americas. Most people still do not have access even to safe drinking water, and health care is a luxury. There are no indications that the recent infusion of foreign aid will make a dent in these horrible conditions.

The more useful parts of the funding—e.g. some $36.5 million for the Port-au-Prince water supply from the U.S. and France—were deliberately backloaded into 1997 or later, so that the Aristide government would not get any credit for improving people's lives. But the real problem is that very little is allocated to meet Haiti's most pressing development needs: about 1.1 percent of disbursements went to agriculture—in a country that is 70 percent rural—and even less to education and the environment.

Haiti's refusal to follow the privatization orders from the IFI's prevented the government from reaching an agreement for the next stage of structural adjustment—the Extended Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF)—until just last month. This is a 10 year loan of $131 million administered by the IMF, conditional on structural "reforms" as well as macroeconomic

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targets over the next three years. Since the IFI's act together as a block, this loan is a prerequisite for further funding—e.g. the Inter-American Development Bank's $565 million, which is the biggest chunk of the $2.12 billion aid package. Interestingly, the latest difficulties have nothing to do with Haiti's macro-economic performance under the Standby Arrangement, which, according to the IMF's evaluation last year, was more than satisfactory. Thanks to the watchful eye of the Haiti's monetarist Central Bank President, Leslie Delatour, Haiti actually exceeded the Standby Arrangement's targets by $20 million. This means that Delatour pursued an even tighter monetary policy than was required. (It is not uncommon for central bank presidents in dependent countries to be approved by the IMF, and Delatour is apparently no exception. In some cases the central bank is virtually run by the IMF mission within the country).

In spite of this compliance with the most important macro-economic policies prescribed by the IMF, negotiations remained at an impasse for more than a year. Part of the explanation resides in the IFIs' lust for privatization—not to mention the desires of such companies as MCI, which already collects 50 percent on the growing number of international phone calls it bills from Haiti. But there is another problem as well: they still don't trust Preval, in spite of his earnest efforts to overcome the suspicion of his predecessor by actively endorsing privatization and giving up the pursuit of the FRAPH and army documents stolen by the U.S. during the invasion. They comprise more than 160 thousand pages and other material including the grizzly "trophy" photos of torture victims. These are a potential source of tremendous embarrassment to the U.S., as they undoubtedly document the well-known role of the U.S. government in the horrific campaign of murder and repression carried out during the coup years.[11] During the last months of the Aristide administration some progress was made toward obtaining their release, and the abandonment of these documents is no small concession to the U.S.

So why don't they trust Preval? First, it must be remembered that he, like Aristide, was not the approved candidate

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for the office. In fact, General Shalikashvili (Chief of Staff of the U.S. Armed Forces) is reported to have specifically told Aristide, before the Lavalas candidate to succeed Aristide was chosen, that Preval was "unacceptable." But to really answer this question one must understand how these negotiations with the IMF really work. At first glance they resemble any other bargaining process, e.g. labor negotiations, where each side has its proposed program and some compromise is reached. We would of course expect a poor, indebted country to be in a weak bargaining position. But in reality the process turns out to be much worse than this. The IMF does not believe it is involved in a bargaining process at all– quite the contrary, its officials believe that they are merely "helping" the recipient country to pursue sound macro-economic policies. In order to grant the loan, then, they must normally be convinced that the government actually *believes* in the program. (In Aristide's case they made an exception for the United States' strategic reasons). The best analogy is something akin to the Salem witchcraft trials of the 17th century. They want a public confession, and it must be a convincing one. It appears that the IMF is not yet persuaded that Preval (and his government) truly *believe.* This means that even though an agreement has finally been reached, there will probably be continued struggles over disbursements, as well as back-loading of projects that might improve peoples' lives.

The new ESAF, not surprisingly, requires Haiti to continue along the same deadend neoliberal path. It calls for further reductions in tariffs, continued starving of the public enterprises of necessary credits, and increasing government revenue with regressive sales taxes. And foreign aid disbursements are projected to be cut in half over the next three years, reflecting the much lower priority that a re-elected Clinton administration assigns to Haiti. Significantly, however, the IFIs did not get all they wanted on privatization—the major public enterprises will not be auctioned off, although some portion of private investment and ownership will be allowed. World Bank officials have expressed their dissatisfaction with these results—another indication that Haiti's latest accommodation with the IFIs is still on shaky ground.

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What conclusions can we draw from the struggle over structural adjustment in Haiti? First, it is clear that Haiti's situation is similar to that of many other countries whose economic policies are dictated by the IFIs. These institutions, led by the IMF, are primarily concerned with subjugating their client countries' economies to the needs of Northern capital. Haiti's recent history provides a stark illustration of how these needs conflict with the most basic human and developmental needs of the population.

Second, it should be clear that the economic power wielded by the IFIs is only one part of the system of neo-colonial domination. When the threat of economic violence fails to achieve the desired result, military and para-military violence may be used. In an age when most wars and conflicts are portrayed as deriving from ethnic or narrow "political" rivalries, it is important not to overlook the claws and teeth of old-fashioned imperialism when it is confronted by even a small and impoverished country that seeks to pursue its own development needs.

Lastly, the outcome of structural adjustment agreements is not predetermined, but is affected by political struggle in both rich and poor countries. In Haiti's case its particular position in U.S. domestic politics after the coup left it with more bargaining room as against the IFIs than most similarly situated countries, although the limits of this space were not tested. But most importantly, the popular resistance to privatization in Haiti shows that such organized opposition can have a significant effect. To be sure, this is a small victory, and not nearly enough to rescue Haiti from the "American plan." But the popular movements in Haiti are just beginning to recover from the terrible losses they suffered during the coup years—not to mention the thirty years of U.S.-sponsored dictatorship that preceded them. And the fight against structural adjustment around the world is just beginning.

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NOTES

1. Paul Lewis, "Venezuela Gets Big I.M.F. Credit, Backing Market Reforms," *New York Times*, July 13 1996.
2. Ernest H. Preeg, *The Haitian Dilemma*, (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996).
3. Lundahl, *Politics or Markets? Essays on Hatian Underdevelopment*, (London: Routledge, 1992).
4. Haiti—Recent Economic Developments, IMF, March 1, 1995, p. 56.
5. Thomas L. Friedman, "The White House Refuses to Link Aristide's Return and Democracy," *New York Times*, October 8, 1991, p. A10.
6. See, e.g. "CIA Formed Haitian Unit Later Tied to Narcotics Trade," *New York Times*, November 14, 1993, p. A1.
7. Most recently, Constant (as well as Biamby) has been implicated in the 1993 assassination of Justice Minister Guy Malary, according to a secret CIA report. The report was obtained by the Center for Constitutional Rights in a lawsuit filed on behalf of Alerte Belance, who was hacked with machetes and left for dead by FRAPH agents three years ago. She was severely wounded and left disabled, but survived.

   Constant, whom the Haitian government wanted extradited to stand trial in Haiti, was released from a Maryland jail into the custody of his mother last June. Under a highly unusual agreement with the State Department, the National Security Council, the Justice Department, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, he "is free to live and work in the United States provided he does not speak publicly about his past associations with the CIA. He is also free to emigrate to any country he wants." (See Tim Weiner, "A 1993 Report By C.I.A. Tied Haiti Agents to Slaying," *New York Times*, October 13, 1996, p. A9).
8. "Strategy of Social and Economic Reconstruction," Presentation of the Government of Haiti to the Paris Club, August 22, 1994.
9. Haiti—Staff Report for the 1995 Article IV Consultation and Request for Stand-by Arrangement. IMF, February 17. 1995.
10. Larry Rohter, "Aristide Forces Retirement of Haiti's Top Military Officers," *New York Times*, February 22, 1995, p. A4.
11. For reports on the relations between the CIA and Haiti's military and para-military death squads see Allan Nairn, "Haiti Under the Gun," *The Nation*, January 8/15, 1996; and "Our Man in FRAPH: Behind Haiti's Paramilitaries," *The Nation*, October 24, 1994.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ECHOES

by JEANNE RIHA

While the barbarians in Congress carried off only a portion of their intended environmental loot last session, those who cherish the country's natural treasures had better not relax. If hisory is a guide, the vandals will be back primed for the next onslaught. So it has been from the beginning.

Probably the period closest to—and even worse than—the current assault on natural resources occurred after the Civil War as industrialization took place.

But even four decades earlier President John Quincy Adams—though no progressive—had tried to turn national assets into public rather than private hands with a program of public improvements to be financed from the proceeeds of government land sales. He would use "the bounties of Providence" for multiple projects ranging even to a national university and astronomical research.

Congress preferred to give handouts to private canal companies, and a sorely disappointed Adams, after leaving office, wrote in 1837:

I fell, and with me fell, I fear never to rise again, certainly never to rise again in my day, the system of internal improvement by National means and National energies....The American Union as a moral person in the family of Nations, is to live from hand to mouth, to cast away...the bounties of Providence, and to rise to the summit of Power a succession of Presidents the consummation of whose glory will be to growl and snarl with impotent fury against a money

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broker's shop...and to waste in boundless bribery to the West the invaluable inheritance of the Public Lands.[1]

But it was the era of free enterprisers of the new industrial age that seized the American government and for decades stripped the country of every valued resource they could lay their hands on. They controlled Congress, the courts, and—going Gingrich one better—virtually all the presidencies for almost four decades, long enough to seize forests, minerals, coalfields, oilfields, stone, water, land, and air. What gifts of the land didn't gravitate into the industrial maw were bartered away to line someone's pockets.

With millions of acres of land grants to railroad and other corporations and to states, with a series of land disposal laws that invited fraud and waste, they chopped the approximate 1.8 billion acre public domain of the late 1800s down to some 363 million "unreserved and unappropriated" acres of 1909.[2]

For decades those opposing the plunder protested in vain. Too many people found profit, or thought they could find profit, in the new economy and the resources it used. Eighty percent of the public forests which covered some 822 million acres in 1600 had fallen into private hands by 1928.[3] Besides profligate use, theft was rampant. Annual reports of the Department of Interior carried a regular section in the early 1900s on how much timber had been stolen by trespassers the previous year.

It took a while before Progressive era reformers and Depression historians could piece together the full account of those years of greed and pillage. But contemporaries protested as best they could in the midst of the fray.

James Weaver, who twice ran for president as protest candidate, spelled out the agrarian fury of the times in an 1892 book, *A Call to Action*, in which he charged:

> The public domain has been squandered, our coal fields bartered away, our forests denuded, our people impoverished, and we are attempting to build a prosperous commonwealth among people who are being robbed of their homes...[4]

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Mark Twain poked malicious fun at railroad contractors and land speculators in *The Gilded Age* but saved some of his choicest wit for a thoroughly venal Congress:

...in a free country like ours, where any man can run for Congress and anybody can vote for him, you can't expect immortal purity all the time—it ain't in nature. Sixty or eighty or a hundred and fifty people are bound to get in who are not angels in disguise...but still it is a very good average; very good indeed. As long as it averages as well as that, I think we can feel very well satisfied. Even in these days, when people growl so much and the newspapers are so out of patience, there is still a very respectable minority of honest men in Congress.[5]

When historians and politicians got around to reviewing the scene later, many of them refused to accept the premise that only by peopling the vacant acres quickly could the country be developed into an industrial power.

Had government reserved title to the public domain and leased the land under proper protection for improvements, the nation might have avoided the evils of corruption, resource waste, speculation, monoply, and huge estates, reformer Frederic C. Howe speculated in 1910. (Today we would add the evil of pollution).

But no such vision has guided our policy. To be quickly rid of our resources and on any terms has been a consuming passion with us. Human ingenuity could scarcely have devised a more wasteful policy than that which has been pursued.[6]

This claim of quick riddance was literally verified by one of the General Land Office reports in 1868 which asserted, "The title to the soil thus acquired [by the U.S. government] it has ever been the policy of the United States to transmute into individual ownership in the shortest possible space of time."[7]

From the vantage point of 1940, Louis M. Hacker, historian, looked at those years in a way that has some curious modern parallels:

The American Civil War turned out to be a revolution indeed. But its striking achievement was the triumph of industrial capitalism. The industrial capitalists, through their political spokesmen, the Republicans, had succeeded in capturing the state and using it as

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an instrument to strengthen their economic position. It was no accident, therefore, that while the war was waged on the field and through Negro emancipation, in Congress' halls the victory was made secure by the passage of tariff, banking, public-land, railroads, and contract-labor legislation.[8]

And Mathew Josephson echoed the lament over lost resources in *The Robber Barons*:

In a hurried partition, for nominal sums or by cession, this benevolent government handed over to its friends or to the astute first comers, the most daring undertakers, all those treasures of coal and oil, of copper, and gold, and iron, the land grants, the terminal sites, the perpetual rights of way—an act of largesse which is still one of the wonders of history.[9]

While most dissenters were limited to talk at the height of the resource grab, some administrative reforms were undertaken.

One of the era's rare honest men, Carl Schurz, came in to head the Department of the Interior in 1877 and stiffened protection of timber from trespassers and thieves. Some land disposal laws were repealed or modified. After long procrastination a system of forest reserves, later to become national forests, was created on the public lands, although that didn't mean cutting was stopped. Presidents had begun using executive privilege to set aside timberland reserves and, by the time Theodore Roosevelt left office in 1909, there were about 193 million acres in national forests,[10] a dubious protection as it turned out.

At the time the forests were created, practically all the timber lands that were economically accessible had passed into private ownership.[11]

For moderns, now immersed in another era of plunder, it's enlightening to see how Schurz fixed blame for the earlier resource rape. He condemned, of course, those on the scene—miners, hunters, prospectors, settlers, railroaders, lumbermen, and plain thieves. But also:

It is a public opinion that looked with indifference on this wanton, barbarous, disgraceful vandalism. It is a spendthrift people recklessly wasting its heritage. It is a government careless of the future and unmindful of a pressing duty....It is that spirit of levity so

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prevalent among our people which teaches us to eat, drink, and be merry, unmindful of the reckoning that will come tomorrow.[12]

NOTES

1. Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Union* Vol. II (New York: Knopf, 1956), pp. 150-51.
2. 1.8 billion acres: Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, Secretary of Public Lands, 1898, iv.; 363 million: Charles Van Hise, *The Conservation of Natural Resources in the United States*, 1912 pp. 293-94. The federal public domain rose from 413 million acres in 1946 to almost 588 million acres in 1991, according to the 1994 *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, Table 353, p. 225.
3. Jenks Cameron, *The Development of Governmental Forest Control in the United States* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1928). Pp.1,109.
4. *A Call to Action: An Interpretation of the Great Uprising, Its Source and Causes* (Des Moines: Iowa Printing Co., 1892), pp. 5-6, 151.
5. Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age*, V.1 (New York: Harper, 1873), p. 201, quoting "Col. Sellers."
6. *Privilege and Democracy in America* (New york: Scribner's, 1910), p. 32.
7. *Department of the Interior Reports*, p. 96.
8. *The Triumph of American Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University, 1940), p. 373.
9. *The Robber Barons* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, c. 1934), p. 52.
10. M. Nelson McGeary, *Gifford Pinchot* (Princeton., 1960), pp. 78-79.
11. Cameron, p. 259.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

In our reflecting and reasoning age a man is not worth much who cannot give a good reason for everything, no matter how bad or crazy. Everything in the world that has been done wrong has been done wrong for the very best of reasons.

—Karl Marx

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Exterminate All the Brutes

by Camille Goodison

Pierre Seel, *I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual: A Memoir of Nazi Terror* translated by Joachim Neugrosche (BasicBooks HarperCollins, 1995, re-released in paperback in August 1996), 208 pp., $12.00; Sven Lindqvist, *Exterminate All The Brutes: One Man's Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness and the Origins of European Genocide* translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate (The New Press 1996), 192 pp., $20.00.

Though they've gone largely unpublicized, recently, out of France and Sweden have come two most notable and impressive works. One, *I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual,* originally printed in French, is a personal memoir of persecution, torment, and self-discovery; the other, *Exterminate All The Brutes,* by Swedish author Sven Lindqvist aims quite successfully to analyze Europe's dark history in Africa. Both books are remarkably personal, particular, and complete. The authors adopt a confidential, intimate tone as they embark on a slow and methodical venture into the roots of mass extermination. Lindqvist believes he's found the answer. Seel is not sure he ever will. Nevertheless, both men, feeling haunted, embark on a seemingly familiar journey in search of reasons why. They find much that's recognizable and even more that is not.

How very uncommon it is for one to come across a story told with such dignity, power and grace. Released last August in hardcover, *I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual* should not be missed this

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time around by anyone interested in a full and complete account of the gross and vulgar inhumanity of Nazism and even more pointedly the life-long wounds that still affect its survivors.

Seel's memoir is as personal narrative quite compelling and I found it impossible to put down. There have of course been many accounts of the atrocities suffered at the hands of Hitler's Nazis, by Holocaust survivors themselves and others, especially in the past twenty years or so. I feel Seel's book should serve to underscore a point, however, and it is that both the apprehensive and the cruel do us a disservice when they chose to ignore important aspects of that brutal, monstrous period. Make no bones about it, the Holocaust of the Second World War did not make victims of just one group, nor was it as anomalous, unexpected, and extraordinary as many people seem to believe. Lindqvist's book does a fine job of proving this.

While acknowledging the horrible experiences of European Jewry who had to contend with over a millennium of persecution and the final indignity of having their numbers reduced by a third, it is of the utmost importance that no part of the history of the Third Reich be suppressed or dismissed. The lesson, I think, is not so much to look at the suffering of my people, but to look at the inescapable barbarity and inhumanity of the "civilizations" we build when we are willing to compromise the humanity of others for our own benefit and comfort.

One of the most unfortunate ironies of this book, I believe, is the critique by some scholars that efforts such as Seel's wanting to restore the memory of gays as victims of the Holocaust are anti-semitic acts of historical revisionism. This sort of reluctance to let the whole story out, or at least to maintain a tight narrative, born of justified suspicion perhaps, does nothing to stop or prevent modern day genocides and other acts of cruelty.

The gestapos, prisons, crematoriums were not sudden, unexpected responses to virulent anti-semitism. They were the result of a slow, seeping poison that had instilled itself into Europe the moment its intellectuals, humanists, and rulers decided they constituted one noble race meant to rule all others. This idea was not met with much indignation until it came back to haunt Europeans themselves. Aime Cesaire in his 1955 essay, *Discourse on Colonialism*, had this to say:

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And then one day...a terrific reverse shock: the gestapos are busy, the prisons fill up....people are surprised, they become indignant. They say: 'How strange! But never mind- it's Nazism, it will pass!' and they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, but the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because until then, it had applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism,that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack.

Keeping all of this in mind, it should be obvious why we must not support the belief that telling the story of the Holocaust of Jewish men, women, and children along with the stories of wanton massacres in Central and South America, for example, or the Rwanda butcherings or the deportation of a Gentile, French bourgeois homosexual serves to compromise or foil the stories of others. The unique power of Seel's account is that this point seems clear and he makes it without hectoring but just by very simply laying out the facts of his life. We must not be inconsistent or narrow or biased. The lesson of the Holocaust must be, "never will we diminish the rights of anyone." It is only until we have made an unyielding commitment to this principle then can we truly say, "Never Again!"

A most beautiful and elegantly written book, *I, Pierre Seel* starts off with a youthful and innocent seventeen year old Seel cruising the local square in Alsace, a border region of France by then annexed by Hitler. A middle class dandy, he had his watch stolen on Steinbach Square. He made the decision to report the theft and was initially treated courteously. Growing increasingly suspicious of the young man's homosexuality, the policeman who took his statement started asking questions pertaining to Seel's being present in this particular square and at such a late hour. The officer reprimanded and humiliated him before finally letting him go. Unknown to Seel, however, the matter was not forgotten and his name was added to the police list of the city's homosexuals. It was this list that "delivered [Seel] into the hands of the Nazis." (p.14)

Cruelly summoned, interrogated, abused by the gestapo, Seel then quickly finds himself banished to the frightening Schirmeck-Labroque concentration camp. The seventy-three year old author paints the most complete, detailed, and precise picture imaginable of what those hell camps were really like. Jews, Communists, Gyp-

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sies, priests, Russians, Poles, Spanish Republicans, and "asocials" like Seel, were some of the inmates received at Schirmeck and who were subjected to the extreme sadism of the sinister, death-obsessed German guards.

Heartbreakingly, he describes the beatings and transgressions inmates, with the encouragement of their captors, visited upon each other. You want to weep as the inmates, often racked by disease and raped of all their spirit and vitality, turn on a fellow inmate whose only crime was that he was the most weak and sickly. They kick and cuff him until he is finally able to drag himself away, in extreme fear, to die. He speaks prosaically of madness, hunger, and torture cells. He neglects no aspect of his imprisonment or of the war.

There was to be no rest. After the war, Seel was again a prisoner, unable to speak to anyone about what he had gone through. He had himself locked very tightly, so to speak, in a dark, lonely closet:

> I returned as a ghost, I remained a ghost: it probably didn't hit me that I was still alive. Nightmares haunted me day and night, I practiced silence. I wanted to forget all the details and all the terrors of those four years that I had lived through. I was totally exhausted by my multiple encounters with death, and I painfully realized how powerless I had been in regard to the deaths of other people. A huge sadness took hold of me. And I felt no desire. (p.95)

The last chapters of Seel's memoir offers interesting, unique, and painful testimony as to why this personal account is so necessary now. As he gradually and very belatedly leaves his numbing world of isolation and shame to confront his past, he reveals with a subtle but effective power how these injustices could have taken place during the Third Reich and how they might be possible still. Like thousands of other formerly exiled homosexual Holocaust Survivors, it is the self-imposed prison of denial and the war with himself and a surprisingly insensitive society which makes *I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual* such a singular and essential book. It is a welcome and most outstanding contribution to the literature of the Holocaust. This simple, elegant, beautiful book, though described as a memoir, and is, speaks most sturdily not of an atrocious long gone past but of today. Seel takes you on a journey of absolute cruelty and indifference but also of awe-inspiring dignity, love, and hope.

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Sven Lindqvist has written a book no less wrenching and like Pierre Seel has found controversy in his native land. *Exterminate All the Brutes* is written in the form of a travel diary as well as an historical examination of European racism during what is known euphemistically as the expansionist period. Lindqvist, using a technique originally glimpsed in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, sets Conrad's famed *Heart of Darkness* in context and matches it with the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century colonial writings of European explorers, missionaries, and politicians.

Traveling across the continent (and always with a keen eye), examining the historical documents and analyzing the relevant literature, the Swedish writer decides that "Europe's destruction of the 'inferior races' of four continents prepared the ground for Hitler's destruction of six million Jews in Europe." He concedes that each of these genocides had its own unique characteristics.

Two events need not be identical, he states, for one of them to facilitate the other. Expansionism, accompanied as it was by extermination, merely created "habits of thought and political precedents" that made way for new and ever more horrendous outrages.

Writing with the attention and care of an artist, he visits Joseph Conrad's Africa, and using the voluminous literature available to him conjures up images of the bloody past so shocking as to be disturbing, both to himself and the reader. He is tormented by what he's unearthed.

This traveler of space and time chooses an unconventional style in which to lay out his hard-won facts. The text is written in a fluid style. Loose and picturesque travel scenes or hard comparisons and analysis are sometimes interrupted by elements of the surreal. These intermittent episodes can be appreciated on their own:

> My stomach is being filled with a great blood blister. My whole belly is full of black blood. Just as toenail blackens and falls off when the blood has coagulated under it, my body blackens and drops off. All that is left is the throbbing blood beneath its membrane, thin and shimmering likea soap bubble. An immense drop of black blood, for a moment still held together by its surface tension—that is me, before I burst.

One of the more controversial parts of Lindqvist's book is his disagreement with the claim that the massacre of the Jews had

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comparatively little to do with the imperialist parts of the Nazi program.

Unlike the mass exterminations conducted on the African continent during the imperialist period of expansion and unlike the extermination of the Russians and the Slavs, the attempted genocide of the Jews was almost entirely racialist. Hard labor in the death camps was merely a means to an end and possibly was of no real material benefit to the Third Reich.

Lindqvist, diligent and convincing in his analysis, believes imperialist expansion gave the Nazis the practical and economic reasons to exterminate the Jews. He continues, linking the extermination project's theoretical model, the *Lebensraum* theory, with imperialist tradition. Near the end of his book length philosophical quest, he declares that "to the same [imperialist] tradition belongs the historical model of extermination of Jews: genocide in the colonies."

Like a detective crime novel slowly unraveling, *Exterminate All the Brutes,* offers up fascinating, incriminating bits as the text builds to a convincing conclusion. But also he leaves the reader with much to think about for herself. Not unlike that of the Knights in the quest for the Holy Grail, his is a spiritual quest. On his travels he sees plenty, discerns much, and is comforted by little.

He concludes his book by saying something worth repeating:

> And when what had been done in the heart of darkness was repeated in Europe, none recognized it. No one wished to admit what everyone knew.
>
> Everywhere in the world where knowledge is being suppressed, knowledge that, if it were made known, would shatter our image of the world and force us to question ourselves– everywhere there, *Heart of Darkness* is being enacted.
>
> You already know that. So do I. It is not knowledge we lack. What is missing is the courage to understand what we know and draw conclusions.

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Lyricist On the Left

by Paul Buhle

Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in the Wizard of Oz? Yip Harburg, Lyricist.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993, 1995 paperback), 454 pp.

E. Y. "Yip" Harburg, who proudly proclaimed *Monthly Review* his favorite magazine, was in turn a favorite lyricist of a long list of celebrities, including Tony Bennett, Ray Bolger, Frank Sinatra, Lena Horne, and Yip's lifetime friends, George and Ira Gershwin. In the decades before the Blacklist, such connections of the Left and popular entertainers were far from unknown. Gene Kelly, John Garfield, Marilyn Monroe, Lucille Ball and a long list of others joined movements or signed petitions for favorite progressive causes. Some even read the Marxist classics. Indeed, during the 1940's, the notorious insomniac Sinatra reputedly spent his post-midnight hours poring over *Capital*! But Harburg was special and stayed special because of his unique touch. Anyone watching *The Wizard of Oz* carefully or listening to that Depression anthem, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" knows it.

The story goes back, like many others in modern American popular culture, to the streets of New York's Lower East Side at the turn of the century. Born in 1896 to immigrant Jewish parents at what was called the "pushcart center of the world," he grew up amidst material poverty but also a richness of cultural possibilities. Tin Pan Alley, founded by mostly German immigrants, was busy

Paul Buhle, a frequent contributor to *Monthly Review*, is working on the films of the Hollywood Blacklistees.

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cranking out hits heard on the *yiddishe gossen* (Jewish streets), and new movie houses competed with a lively Yiddish theatre for customers.

Harburg (called "Yip" after yipsl, Yiddish for squirrel) drank in the atmosphere, saving up his nickels for vaudeville where he could see the likes of Fanny Brice, Ed Wynn and Bert Lahr perform. He began writing verses for his grade school monthly. And he dreamed he could somehow help his parents escape the drudgery of their tenement lives. The next step was to master poetic form as the basis for the song lyric.

The boom years were just beginning for theatrical music, and like his youthful contemporaries Ira Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Larry Hart, and Harold Arlen, Yip believed the lyrics could be better. Finishing college at CCNY and avoiding the draft into World War One (which the instinctively rebellious Yip bitterly opposed), he became a corporate executive in Uruguay, writing and acting in amateur productions on the side. Still determined to support his parents, he came back and went into the electrical appliance business. And there he stayed until 1929, making good money until the crash destroyed his business, still writing poems for various columns in the New York press when he could spare the time.

Then everything changed: Liberated by financial failure, "I was released...I became alive" at the ripe age of 33. He wrote for radio, he wrote for some of the first musical talkies, and he wrote a few successful songs for Tin Pan Alley, including an all-time favorite, "I'm Yours." More important, by this time the musical had become an established Broadway genre, and the Gershwin Brothers, Rodgers, and Hart unveiled the possibility of a unique profession. The Ballyhoo of 1932 gave Yip the chance to write for the great comic stage talents, and he was really on his way.

But not just to personal success. As an elderly Yip told Studs Terkel, he kept walking around and looking at breadlines listening to pleas like "Can you spare something for a cup of coffee?" He turned a romantic number for a Broadway show into one of the most devastating lyrical attacks ever made on capitalism's consequences:

Once I built a railroad,
Made it run
Made it race against time
Once I built a railroad
Now it's done
Brother, can you spare a dime?

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The song contained so much verbal (and musical) dynamite that radio programmers were first warned to give it minimal play. No such luck for conservatives: Bing Crosby and even Al Jolson made popular records of it.

Such opportunities for social commentary were, however, remarkably rare in the deepest depression that the country had ever seen. Yip's other memorable lyrics, mostly for Broadway musicals, emphasized the illusions of daily continuity ("It's Only a Paper Moon") that we all walk around in, unconscious of life's precariousness and preciousness. Too often, the lyrical resolution was boy-gets-girl and vice-versa. But Yip at least put it humorously: "My heart's in a deadlock/I'd even face wedlock, with you."

Then came his biggest break. When MGM executives determined to make L. Frank Baum's famous children's stories into a major musical but found themselves unable to decide how, firing one director after another, lyricist Harburg practically took over The Wizard of Oz. His integrated score made sense, sometimes very radical sense, of the strange allegorical tale. He invented the public ritual that constituted life in the Munchkinland where Dorothy and her dog Toto landed. Then Yip strung his songs across an adventure that revealed the illusions of the perpetuation of the Dream (a better, happier world, at least for Dorothy).

Cultural historians have had a field-day with *The Wizard of Oz* in recent years. And yet no one claims to have disentangled all the reasons why it has become a sort of popular culture epic–most uniquely for the gay movement, which found liberating messages that the film's creators likely did not imagine. Scholars have no doubt, however, that it was Yip who made possible the transformation of a Populist fantasy into a musical smash hit which has realized its greatest triumph among generations of television-watching kids around the world.

Yip had many other remarkable moments of creativity, some forgotten (like "Bloomer Girls," a 1940's musical about the nineteenth century women's rights movement) and some rather badly worn (like the bungled film version of his theatrical classic, *Finian's Rainbow*). Aficionados will recall "Lydia, the Tatooed Lady" from the Marx Brothers' *At the Circus* and Lena Horne's various songs in *Cabin in the Sky* (the first black film for a mass audience), among others. Only here and there, as in his masterpiece, the stage version of *Finian's Rainbow*, did the radicalism truly show through. Yip also

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fought successfully to have whites and blacks dance together for the first time in Broadway history in this 1947 classic.

It grew harder to sustain Harburgian fantasy with the Red Scare all around. Yip's response was predictably comical: "The Eagle–fierce omnivorous vulture/Noble emblem of our culture/Has been reduced to just a smidgen/Who cooked his goose? The cool stool pigeon." Banned from films, radio, and television, Yip kept going in theatre, although with steadily greater difficulty. As a case in point, *Flahooley* hit Broadway in 1951 with what can only be described as broad Marxist satire, and failed commercially. He did create Lena Horne's first starring role in a musical via *Jamaica* (1957), ahead of the curve satirizing Caribbean tourism and on the beam in ridiculing even so-called peaceful atomic power ("Leave de Atom Alone").

By the time the Blacklist ended, so had the golden age of the musical comedy film. Working on, fired up by the horrors of American militarism, Yip even rewrote Lysistrada as an attack on what he once dubbed "Pentagonorrhea." Pushed toward retirement by changes of musical fashion, he wrote light verse, some of it political and not at all light in its implications. This reviewer devoured it among the very first issues of *Monthly Review* he read in the sixties. It was to me, as it must have been to others my age, a message from a childhood hero, somehow in a different vein than expected but all the more welcome on that account. Years later I met Yip in his apartment, throwing a political benefit/reception, and he was such a charming elf that he lived up to an anticipation decades in the making. He died in 1981.

No review can do justice to the care and insight that authors Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg (the Yipster's son) have put into *Who Put the Rainbow in the Wizard of Oz?* Their detailed analysis of lyrics and the connections of lyrics with the music will provide much food for thought for all those who seek to understand how popular culture can work, at its best, against the logic of the cash-register system that handles the receipts, manipulates the audience, and pays off the artist (as little as possible). The best thing about *Who Put the Rainbow* is that, like Yip himself, it manages to tell the truth about Yip's cultural politics without ever being heavy-handed. This is a lesson we all need to learn.

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Image and Reality

by David Finkel

Norman G. Finkelstein *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict.* (New York and London: Verso, 1995), 243 pp., $19.00.

New historical and meticulous demographic research demonstrates that most of the Muslim population of Bosnia-Herzegovina has few stable roots in that country. Rather than a centuries-old Muslim community, most Bosnian Muslims turn out to have immigrated over the course of a few decades in the twentieth century–attracted by the prosperity created by the economically advanced Serbs.

It is difficult to imagine that such a proposition, if presented to educated Western public opinion, would be accepted without critical scrutiny. The intellectual and political culture of the United States has been conditioned, perhaps, to simply ignore the fate of the Bosnian people–but not to deny outright their historical existence.

The situation is different when it comes to perceptions of Israel and Palestine. Twelve years ago, in the immediate wake of Israel's invasion of Lebanon, with its profoundly negative public relations consequences, a work by Joan Peters titled *From Time Immemorial* received effusive praise from professional historians (Lucy Dawidowicz, Barbara Tuchman, Ronald Sanders) and political propagandists (Martin Peretz, Sidney Zion, Arthur Goldberg) alike.

Peters purported to produce a demographic study demonstrating that most of the pre-1948 Arab Palestinian population were

David Finkel is an editor of the socialist journal *Against the Current*

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recent immigrants rather than long-time inhabitants of their own homeland. Heavily promoted in *The New Republic* and *Commentary*, Peters achieved instant intellectual-flavor-of-the-month status in U.S. circles, even while scholarly opinion in Israel largely ignored or dismissed the work as that of a bumbling amateur.

In fact, as a young researcher at Princeton University named Norman Finkelstein showed, it was more than that. Instead of perusing Peters' book and throwing it aside as a waste of time, Finkelstein plowed through its disorganized tangle of statistics, checked its sources and discovered "the fact that From Time Immemorial is among the most spectacular frauds ever published on the Israeli-Arab conflict...(The fraud) is so pervasive and systematic that it is hard to pluck out a single thread without getting entangled in the whole unravelling fabric." (p.22. All references to Finkelstein, *Image and Reality* unless otherwise noted)

Norman Finkelstein's deconstruction of the Peters fraud appeared in the collection *Blaming the Victims. Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, edited by Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (Verso, 1988), and a revised version of the essay appears in Finkelstein's new book as Chapter 2, "A Land Without a People."

Although reading this chapter is time-consuming–and the details too intricate to summarize here–the reader should carefully follow Finkelstein's exposure of Peters' mis-quotations of demographic sources and her lifting of crucial data out of context so that their meaning was turned inside out.

More broadly, Finkelstein's work explores multiple dimensions of the "image and reality of the Israel-Palestine conflict." Although Joan Peters herself soon disappeared from the stage, her fifteen minutes of fame have been survived by the intellectual culture that enabled her forgeries, and that continually reproduces the ambient mythologies.

Finkelstein's most important contribution is to confront us with the consequences of the "dominant intellectual culture" in our own society. It is not surprising, then, that Finkelstein credits his book's title and structure to Noam Chomsky, who more than any other contemporary critic seeks to remove the obstacles to understanding political and social realities through the application of common sense.

Finkelstein's studies are particularly relevant at a time when the once-bright hopes for an independent Palestinian state have

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receded, perhaps for a long time to come. Those flames of hope erupted during the Palestinian Intifada, with its ability to mobilize the Palestinian population and to attract active solidarity internationally and inside Israel.

Doused in the catastrophic Gulf War of 1990-91, the Intifada's radical-democratic flames were replaced by the Madrid and Oslo negotiations, the Arafat-Rabin handshake, the conversion of the Palestine Liberation Organization into the corrupt petty dictatorship of today's Palestinian Authority, and the supplanting of nationalist resistance by a militant but hopeless Islamic fundamentalism.

In this grim historic moment, it is necessary to return to some basic historic realities. First and foremost among these is that the state of Israel was in large measure established through successful acts of ethnic cleansing–a fact as painful as it is ugly, but one which can't be erased simply by ignoring it.

This history needs to be confronted on more than one level. The crudest of falsifications, like the myths of those Arab radio broadcasts, still have currency in the United States even if Israeli society has developed to the point of no longer needing them.

To highlight the crudity and absurdity of what once passed for the history of the 1948 war, I shall return briefly to the Bosnian analogy.[1] Imagine the following hypothetical piece of propaganda:

The flight of Muslims from eastern and central Bosnia beginning in 1991 had a very different cause from what is conventionally called "ethnic cleansing." With a few exceptions where localized killings may have occurred–which have been vastly inflated for Muslim propaganda purposes–such population centers as Banja Luka, Gorazde, and Zepa were actually evacuated on the orders of the Bosnian government leadership.

In fact, these populations were instructed by Muslim radio broadcasts to leave in order to create free-fire zones for Muslim-led military forces to purge the area of Serb residents, after which the Muslims were promised they could take over their former neighbors' homes, lands, and goods.

Such claims of Muslim radio broadcasts ordering supporters to leave their homes of course would be instantly checked, via U.S. and British intelligence monitoring records of all radio broadcasts in the area, and found to be false, just as the records of 1948 showed that there were no such Arab broacast appeals.

More than that, however, the "radio broadcasts" fiction would be immediately recognized as fantastic nonsense on its face. Every-

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one knows that a military force intending to conquer an area of mixed communities would want its own presumed supporters to remain, while conniving to terrorize its ethnic or religious opponents into panic flight. This was as true in the 1948 conflict as in the former Yugoslavia–and it was precisely the method of the Israeli army and irregular Jewish militias in that war.

Establishing the fact that a violent removal of the Arab Palestinian population took place is the elementary first level of debate. For serious students of Israel and Palestine, to be sure, this question was settled years ago.[2]

The second level of debate, to which Finkelstein makes a signal contribution here, has to do with whether this process was pre-planned and centrally ordered–thus rising to the level of a crime against humanity–or occurred more or less spontaneously and without direction in the chaos of local intercommunal fighting.

The crucial factual data for exploring this problem is supplied by the new and formidable body of Israeli scholarly research into the state's origins, which has helped to detail meticulously the expulsion of the Arab population.[3] The question becomes, then, how these data are to be placed in context and interpreted.

Finkelstein's Chapter 3 examines the work of Israeli historian Benny Morris, whose two volumes *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-49* and *1948 and After* make the case that "the Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, not by design."

Scrutinizing Morris' texts and sources, Finkelstein compellingly responds that "Morris definitively shatters one of the most enduring myths about the origins of the Israeli-Arab conflict–but only to substitute another scarcely more credible one in its place." (p. 52)

The fate of the Arabs of Haifa, Lydda, and Ramle and hundreds of villages whose very existence was erased from the map of Israel, Finkelstein insists, corresponds to strategic plans developed by the top political-military leadership of the state from the beginning of the 1947-48 war, and to the longtime well-documented desires of Zionist leaders like Yosef Weitz, cited by Morris himself, expressing the ardent desire for the "transfer" of the Arab population out of Palestine.

Similarly, scrutinizing the work of Israeli historian Anita Shapira, Finkelstein's Chapter 4 goes beyond debunking the old mythology that Zionist settlers reclaimed an "empty wilderness,"

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taking on the more subtle notions of (in Shapira's words) "rivals laying claim to the land" and a "struggle between two national movements fighting to gain sovereignty and control over the same country." In Shapira's account, Zionism's original defensive and benign intentions changed over time to aggressive, exclusivist nationalism.

I was reminded here of a certain kind of American pluralism which, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the "discovery" of the Americas, put forth the interpretation of an "encounter" of European and Native American societies, rather than the conquest and dispossession of one by the other.

Finkelstein will have none of such comforting rationalizations: The historical record, much of it cited by Shapira herself, and the philosophical origins of Zionism in European "Romantic-exclusivistic" and "volkisch" thought, point to the conclusion that the architects of Zionist settlement realized from very early on that the Arab Palestinian society was the fundamental obstacle to their design.

Refusing any compromise with the sentimentality and kitsch that surrounds most discussion of Zionist settlement, Finkelstein pursues the inquiry into deeply disturbing areas. Notable, for example, are the parallels between Shapira's "two national movements" and apartheid South Africa's official claim that the Dutch settlers and the Africans arrived in South Africa at around the same time (pp.94-95); or between "the unique moral climate of the American Jewish intellectual community" that embraced Joan Peters' forgery and that of societies that embraced *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (pp. 97-98).

Most shocking for this reviewer is Finkelstein's discussion of what's called "shooting and crying," in which Israeli soldiers proclaim their abhorrence of the acts they must perform in self-defense. (We will forgive you for what you did to us, Golda Meir used to lecture the Palestinians, but never for what you forced us to do to you...)

Naively, this reviewer had thought such self-pitying sentimentality to be a variant of the love-me-I'm-a-liberal syndrome. Yet Finkelstein demonstrates it to be a virtual echo of what Heinrich Himmler and Rudolf Hoess said about their leading roles in Nazi genocide: "Nothing surely is harder than to grit one's teeth and go through with such a thing, coldly, pitilessly, and without mercy,"

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wrote Hoess of the exterminations of Gypsies and Jews at Auschwitz. (p.119)

Other chapters deconstruct standard versions of the 1967 and 1973 wars, with their implications for past, present, and future "peace processes." This theme will be extended and updated in Finkelstein's second book, *The Rise and Fall of Palestine: A Personal Account of the Intifada Years* (University of Minnesota Press, November 1996).

Norman Finkelstein has given us what he claims, a dissection of "image and reality" particularly as it pertains to the perceptions of the Middle East embedded in dominant U.S. intellectual culture. It is a dissection highly relevant to Israeli politics themselves, especially inasmuch as the new Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is very much a product of that culture, with its supreme self-righteousness, imperial arrogance, and worship of power.

This book should certainly be a basic text for any student of the present situation. Needless to say, it doesn't cover details of policy, the fate of peace after Oslo, or the inner workings of Israeli politics, particularly the growing role of Israel's religious right.

For the former topic, Naseer Aruri's *The Obstruction of Peace: The U.S., Israel and the Palestinians* (Common Courage Press, 1995) is an excellent source. For the latter, Israel Shahak's *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years* (Westview, 1994) is indispensable, along with Professor Shahak's monthly translations from the Hebrew Press (available by subscription from the Middle East Data Center, P.O. Box 337, Woodbridge VA 22194-0337).

With these resources, the student and activist will be intellectually well-equipped, although necessarily pessimistic. The other essential component of action–optimism of the will–must await the next upturn of radical-democratic struggle in the region. Yet even in this worst of times, recovering the historical record, combatting the "dominant culture" and maintaining the moral critique of ongoing oppression is crucial.

In carrying forward this task, Norman Finkelstein draws on numerous antecedents: Ahad Ha-am, Noam Chomsky, Israel Shahak, and critical Israeli and Palestinian scholarship and journalism. Yet there is no doubt of his first and principal inspiration, a concentration camp survivor named Maryla Husyt Finkelstein, Norman's mother, who when asked about her views on the Middle

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East posed the question: "What crime did the Palestinians commit except to be born in Palestine?" (p. 3)

NOTES

1. It should obviously be stressed that any analogy between Bosnia and Palestine is strictly limited. In fact I am not seeking to compare the two in substance, but rather in the receptivity of the U.S. intellectual culture to propagandistic mythologies about them. In the case of Palestine, the tale of the "Arab radio broadcasts" instructing Arab villagers to leave "until we drive the Jews into the sea" is most strikingly symbolic of this ability to accept nonsense as truth, but not the sole example. Indeed Leon Uris' *Exodus*, perhaps the most sensationally successful propaganda novel of the century, is constructed around this and other absurdities that would hardly be taken seriously if suggested in virtually any other context.
2. Yet it remains astonishingly sensitive: When Erskine Childers, author of the groundbreaking essay "The Worldless Wish" on the expulsion of the Palestinians, died this past summer, the *New York Times* published a laudatory obituary notice citing his work with the United Nations—but failed to mention this classic article.
3. On the historical record, recently released Israeli archives have added much detail. Yet it should be noted that even in the 1950s, using only then-available official Israeli and Zionist sources, the American socialist Hal Draper was able to demonstrate all the essential facts of what happened to the Arab population of Palestine in the 1947-48 war and its aftermath. These essays, first published in the Independent Socialist Leage paper *Labor Action*, are to be published with other historical material in a forthcoming collection edited by E. Haberkern for Humanities Press.

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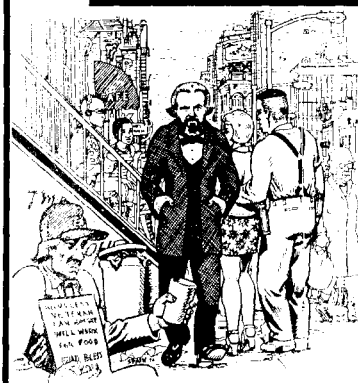

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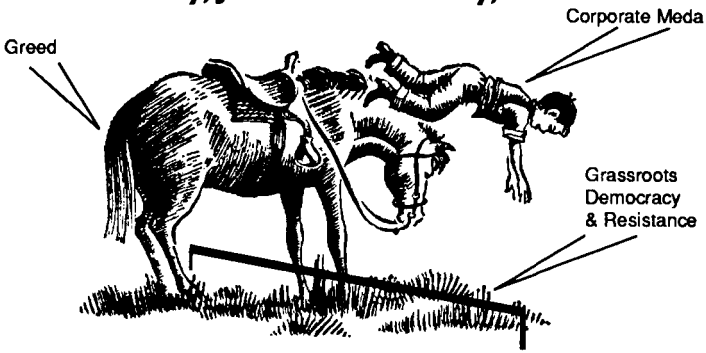

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(Continued from inside front cover)

opposite conclusion. Here it is necessary to retell a story that seems to have been effectively wiped out of this country's always short and fallible memory. Picking up where the black liberation and civil-rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s left off, Jackson ran a campaign for the presidency which seriously threatened to upset the political applecart. The platform on which he ran was far from radical (except by U.S. ideological standards). Without advocating any major changes, he was remarkably successful in getting across to ordinary people the idea that many significant improvements and benefits—in such areas as jobs, housing, health care, and elementary standards of fairness—could be achieved through mass mobilizations and political action. His message got through to wide strata of the population all over the country, attracting the second largest number of votes of the Democratic candidates and pushing others to inject populist themes into their own campaigns.

In the context of U.S. political history, the Jackson campaign was thus a sensation which for a time seemed likely to move the whole Democratic party and its presidential candidate far enough to the left to endanger the traditional relationship between the two major parties. The danger seemed even more acute with the apparent settling of differences between the Jackson and Dukakis camps at the Atlanta convention, and the conclusion of an agreement of the two that would allow Jackson a very important role in the final campaign against the Republicans. Polls at the time gave Dukakis a 17 percent lead over Bush. It seemed that a momentous upheaval in the U.S. political scene was about to materialize.

What happened next was both anti-climactic and enormously revealing of the real nature of the relationship between the Democratic and Republican parties. Populist themes disappeared from Democratic discourse; Dukakis simply reneged on his Atlanta promises to Jackson; ugly racist allegations and rumors proliferated; the upbeat mood of the Democratic convention evaporated; during the crucial two months before the election, the 17-point Dukakis advantage gave way to an equally large lead for Bush. The stage was set for the ensuing Democratic rout.

As far as we know, these events have never been seriously analyzed and were soon banished from political discourse. In our opinion they were and remain crucial to an understanding of the U.S. political system. Their message was twofold: (1) A campaign based on life-and-death concerns to the great majority of the population, and conducted by honest and credible leaders, can open up new vistas and change what now seems to be their narrow and immovable limits: (2)The two established political parties are alert to the threat this situation poses to their continued control over the political process, and it is now clear that they are prepared to do almost anything, including throwing winnable elections, to ward off what from their point of view would be the ultimate disaster.

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